

# National Gun Registration: The Road to Tyranny

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by Miguel A. Faria, Jr.

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**G**eorg Hegel (1770–1831), the father of dialectical idealism, which Karl Marx transmogrified and misappropriated as dialectical materialism, lamented that what we learn from history is that man does not learn its lessons. Despite what we have learned about the deleterious effects of draconian gun control in other countries, particularly during the last bloody century, politicians with authoritarian leanings continue to beat the drums for more gun control.

As any student of history knows, gun control figures prominently in the designs of totalitarian states. These features recur:

- Centralization of the police force with a vast network of surveillance and informants to spy on citizens;
- National identification cards for all citizens;
- Civilian disarmament via gun registration, and licensing, followed by banning and confiscation of firearms.

Once this mechanism of oppression is firmly in place, persecution and elimination of political opponents follow, and every social,

political, and economic policy the Total State desires can be implemented. This has happened in National Socialist states like Nazi Germany, fascist states like Italy under Mussolini, and communist powers such as the former Soviet Union (and its satellites behind the Iron Curtain) and Red China.

It is therefore astonishing and disturbing that Americans have been assailed in the last several years by dangerous political proposals that threaten the individual liberties our Founding Fathers bequeathed to us.

Several bills introduced in Congress last year, all of which could be reintroduced in the new Congress, would have required that all “qualifying firearms” in the hands of law-abiding citizens be registered. California Senator Dianne Feinstein’s bill (cosponsored by Senator Charles Schumer of New York, Senator Barbara Boxer of California, and then-Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey) would also have required that all persons be fingerprinted, licensed with passport-size photographs, and forced to reveal certain personal information as conditions for licensure. As the proposed measure itself elaborates, “It is in the national interest and within the role of the federal government to ensure that the regulation of firearms is uniform among the states, that law enforcement can quickly and effectively trace firearms used in crime, and that firearm owners know how to use and safely store their firearms.”

Another such bill was the one proposed by Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, also

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*Miguel A. Faria Jr., M.D. (hfaria@mindspring.com), is the editor-in-chief of Medical Sentinel, the journal of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, and author of Vandals at the Gates of Medicine: Historic Perspectives on the Battle Over Health Care Reform (1995) and Medical Warrior: Fighting Corporate Socialized Medicine” (Hacienda Publishing Inc., 1997, www.haciendapub.com).*

mandating gun owners to register their firearms (in essence, establishing a national gun registry). It would have treated handguns like machine guns, short-barrel shotguns, grenades, and other specialized weapons. Gun owners would have one year to register all handguns. This would be effected by a vigorous public campaign funded by the taxpayers, as is done in Canada today.

The Canadian experience itself is instructive. Lorne Gunter, in the *Edmonton Journal* (October 13, 2000), reveals that the Canadian Outreach program to register all gun owners is falling short. The campaign not only has failed to register the expected 1.4 million gun owners (only one-third, 486,000, has complied), but it has also exceeded the projected price tag. "The latest estimates project the cost of the registry from December 1998 through March 2001 at \$600 million, seven times the original estimate of \$85 million," Gunter wrote.

Americans, and now Canadians, have pointed out that rather than helping track criminals and their guns as claimed, registration of firearms is dangerous to the liberties of law-abiding citizens, and as we shall see, counterproductive with respect to criminals.

## Gun Registration and Tyranny

Unbeknownst to many Americans, who have seen and experienced mostly the goodness of America, gun registration is the gateway to civilian disarmament, which often precedes genocide. In the monumental book *Lethal Laws*\* we learn that authoritarian governments that conducted genocide and mass killings of their own populations first disarmed their citizens. The recipe for accomplishing this goal was: demonizing of guns, registration, banning and confiscation, and finally total civilian disarmament. Enslavement of the people then followed with limited resistance, as in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Red China, Cuba, and other totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.

When presented with these deadly chronicles and the perilous historic sequence, Americans often opine that it cannot happen here. As to the dangers of licensing of gun owners and registration of firearms, they frequently retort, "If you don't have anything to hide, then you don't have anything to fear!" Followed by, "I see nothing wrong with gun registration because we have to do something; there are just too many guns out there that fall into the wrong hands." These naïve attitudes ignore the penchant of governments to accrue power at the expense of the liberties of individuals.

Civilian disarmament is not only harmful to one's freedom but also counterproductive in achieving safety. That has been further attested by University of Hawaii Professor R. J. Rummel's *Death by Government* (1994) and Stéphane Courtois's edited volume, *The Black Book of Communism* (1999). These books make it clear that authoritarianism and totalitarianism are dangerous to the health of humanity. During the twentieth century, more than 100 million people were killed by their own governments bent on destroying liberty and building socialism and collectivism.

I can personally testify that when Cubans lost their guns in 1959 they also lost their ability to regain freedom. Thus today, Cubans on the other side of the Florida Strait remain enslaved in what was supposed to have been the dream of a socialist utopia, the ultimate Caribbean Worker's Paradise. What they ended up with was the nightmare of a police state in a communist island prison.

Although with the new administration in Washington, registration may not be a politically viable option, other freedom-eroding legislation remains a real concern, particularly if hidden among the scores of bills passed by Congress year after year. Americans must vigilantly protect their sacred liberties, which are threatened, for example, by the closing of gun shows with burdensome regulations, rationing lawful gun purchases, and banning the importation of certain firearm accessories. Laws should be directed against criminals and felons, and should be referred to as crime control rather than gun control.

\* Jay Simkin, Aaron Zelman, and Alan M. Rice (Milwaukee: Jews for the Preservation of Firearm Ownership, 1994); [www.jpfo.org](http://www.jpfo.org).

## Registration and the Law

Another fact Americans need to understand is that registration is directed at law-abiding citizens, not criminals. Not only do convicted criminals by definition fail to obey the law, but they are also constitutionally protected against any registration requirement. In *Haynes v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1968 ruled that requiring registration by those who unlawfully possess firearms amounts to a violation of the Fifth Amendment's proscription against forced self-

incrimination. The court said that if someone "realistically can expect that registration will substantially increase the likelihood of his prosecution," the registration requirement is unconstitutional.

In short, with the historically crucial and potentially fatal issue of progressive civilian disarmament, perhaps, we should once again summon the words of the "Federal Farmer" (1788): "To preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms, and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them." □

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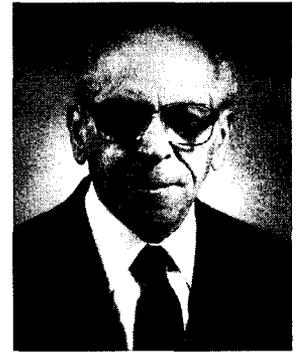


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## Affirmative Chemical Action



In my last column I showed that caffeine is the most widely used mind-altering drug in America, that its use is endorsed by the government, and that the public-school system, allied with the beverage industry, has become one of America's major drug delivery systems. In this column I will show that the popular enthusiasm and political approval of caffeine conflict with the professional judgment of health experts regarding the physiological effects of this drug and with their recommendations regarding its use, especially in children.

Obviously, my critique of the intellectual corruptness of the public-school system's policy on drugs is *not intended as a call for more government control over drugs or schools*. Instead, it is intended as a reminder that the fashionable rhetoric about protecting kids and our self-congratulatory posturing as a child-oriented nation conceal a bitter truth: namely, that in the name of protecting children, educators, mental health personnel, and politicians abuse and persecute children, mainly by systematically lying to them.

Before the anti-drug craze, children were told that masturbating would cause them to go blind. Now they are told that taking certain drugs will make them go mad and become violent or commit suicide; that certain other drugs will prevent and cure all

these horrors; that some drugs are not drugs; and that they must say "no to drugs," except Ritalin, which they *must* take or be expelled from school.

### Caffeine: The Experts Speak

Revealingly, in Goodman and Gilman's *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* (ninth edition)—which is the most widely used textbook of pharmacology in American medical schools—the material about caffeine is placed in a chapter titled "Drug Addiction and Drug Abuse," under the subheading "Cocaine and Other Psychostimulants." This material is preceded by discussion of the effects of cocaine and amphetamines, and is followed by material on cannabinoids (marijuana). Regarding Ritalin, discussed under the heading of its chemical name, "methylphenidate," we learn that "Its pharmacological properties are essentially the same as those of the amphetamines. Methylphenidate also shares the abuse potential of amphetamines."

Amphetamine is a controlled substance; its possession without a prescription is a criminal offense. It would seem not too much to expect that children compelled to attend classes in drug education as well as those compelled to take Ritalin be given a photocopy of those two sentences.

Popular books on child care also condemn the use of caffeine:

*Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*, the bible of American parents' guide to child rearing: "Coffee, tea, cola drinks, and chocolate are

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Thomas Szasz, M.D. ([tszasz@aol.com](mailto:tszasz@aol.com)), is professor of psychiatry emeritus at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse. He is the author of *Fatal Freedom*.