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***Innocents Betrayed***

My first experience teaching was as a teaching assistant in a class called Twentieth Century World at Sonoma State University. It was an upper division general education requirement. Most of what I did for the professor who taught that class was grade papers—but I did lecture for several days about the rise of totalitarianism between World Wars I and II, and the *coup d'état* attempt (if that is what it was) against President Franklin Roosevelt.

One of the points that I covered during those lectures was that the twentieth century was the era of mass murder and genocide. If I were teaching that class today, I would show at least the first 2/3 of *Innocents Betrayed*, a documentary that Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership released last year.

In a series of powerfully disturbing images and narration, *Innocents Betrayed* recounts the great moral tragedies of the twentieth century: the Armenian genocide in Turkey during World War I; the Holocaust during World War II; the millions murdered by the Soviet Union and Red China; the killing fields of Pol Pot's Cambodia; the 1994 Rwanda genocide; the lesser known extermination campaigns in Uganda and Guatemala. While not as organized, and spread over a much longer period of time, the Southern U.S. tradition of lynching fits into this same framework—killing designed to terrorize, often involving merciless torture and mutilation.

The first two-thirds of this 58-minute film captures the horror of these human tragedies. There are pictures that will sadden you, make you angry—or both. There are pictures that will make you wonder how *any* human could be so callous, so unable to

empathize with a fellow human's suffering. Yet for every picture that *Innocents Betrayed* shows you of the brutality of man against man, you must remember that there were millions of victims in *each* of these genocides who you do *not* see.

Stalin, one of the greatest murderers in human history, is reputed to have said, "One death is a tragedy; a million is a statistic." "One million dead": say it out loud; it's just three words. Then watch *Innocents Betrayed*. Look at a picture of the victims for five seconds, and think of the suffering of that victim, of their family, of the life plans that they had, cut short by a machete, a machine gun, starvation, or a gas chamber. Then imagine spending five seconds each looking at pictures of one million victims. How long will it take you? Almost two months.

*Innocents Betrayed* isn't of course, isn't just an historical account. The point that JPFO makes with this film is not just the evil that humans are capable of performing, but that gun control laws play a major part in making these horrible crimes possible. The Holocaust was certainly greatly simplified by Germany's 1928, 1931, and 1938 gun control laws, as well as a tradition of gun control laws in many of the countries that Germany occupied. Turkey also relied on restrictive weapons laws left over from the Ottoman Empire to make it safer to exterminate the Armenians. Even in America, the widespread practice of lynching was greatly simplified by gun control laws that the Southern states had first passed to disarm slaves and free blacks, and then used after the Civil War to keep the newly freed slaves "in their place."

One of the strengths of *Innocents Betrayed* is that it reminds you that genocide wasn't a rare event in the last century. It didn't just happen once or twice. It happened again and again—I guess you could say that humans are slow learners. If you have an

opportunity to visit the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, do so. It is moving and sobering—and please remember that you could construct a similar museum for a dozen other twentieth century crimes of similar magnitude.

While I am quite happy with the first 2/3 of the film, I confess that the last 1/3 impressed me less. Having presented a powerful argument that restrictive gun control laws have often led to genocide and other forms of mass murder, the last 1/3 drew an analogy involving concealed handgun license laws that I felt was a little strained.

Now, remember, I agree with JPFO on the merit of “shall-issue” concealed handgun license laws. I agree that such laws, as the eighteenth century Italian criminologist Cesare Beccaria put it, “make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants....” Yet I found myself feeling a little manipulated—as if I had been shown a sports car for forty minutes, and then offered a riding lawnmower.

Without question, the analogy between the two situations is valid. In both cases, governments have passed laws that disarm victims. Without question, there are people—probably many people—who have been killed, raped, or brutalized, because they did not have a gun with which to defend themselves. But what makes the analogy somewhat weak is that even in states where concealed handgun licenses are easy to get, 5% of the population at most bothers to do so. Large numbers of people, even when it is abundantly clear that they are at risk, simply will not make the effort to get a license and carry a gun.

Perhaps my inability to appreciate the last 1/3 of the film is simply the inverse of Stalin’s famous observation. It may be that after confronting the murder of millions, my

horror level is so high that the individual tragedies of Americans today who are disarmed by their governments seems too insignificant. Your mileage may vary.

Even if you aren't teaching history, I recommend having this videotape in your library. You might want to try it out on some friends who are mildly pro-gun, and see how they react to the last 1/3 before you try the whole tape out on the next Rotary Club meeting. But I expect that the first 2/3 will sober up a lot of people who don't understand why you own a rifle.

WARNING: There are some images in this video that are truly repulsive: mounds of Armenian heads; bodies dismembered; Chinese women whose breasts were cut off by Japanese soldiers in Nanking. The most graphic images are mercifully short—fractions of a second, just long enough for you to be greatly disturbed, but not long enough for you to examine the horror of what happened. Fortunately, these images are black and white, and of poor quality. Because of these very shocking images, *Innocents Betrayed* is *not* appropriate for children. My wife calls it the Prozac video; after you watch it, you'll want to visit the pharmacy for antidepressants and a gun store to make sure, "Never Again."

You can order it directly from JPFO at (800) 869-1884, or through their website at <http://www.jpfo.org/ib-orders.htm>. The current price is \$29.95 on either VHS or DVD, but they have a number of special pricing packages as well that you might want to consider as well.

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