

# GUN VIOLENCE STILL A PLAGUE

*by Ben Palumbo, CACG Board Member*

A bit more than a year ago I wrote about gun violence in our country for this organ of opinion. That piece, which was re-published yesterday here at CACG, began with a different quote: “I believe when statesmen forsake their own private consciences for the sake of their public duties, they lead their country by a short route to chaos”, uttered by Sir Thomas More in Robert Bolt’s “A Man for All Seasons”.

In the year since, over 30,000 of our fellow citizens have died as a result of gun fire; about 12,000 of them were murdered; another 60,000 were injured. It is quite clear that our “statesmen” have done nothing to stop this evil. So Edmund Burke was right.

Why is this true? Why have we thrown away over a trillion dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan supposedly to protect us against terrorism, while appropriating a budget for the Bureau of Tobacco, Alcohol, Firearms and Explosives that provides fewer agents than were on the job in 2003? Of BATFE’s puny budget --just over a billion dollars-- only 70% goes to the effort to control the spread of guns, and a large portion of that is devoted to trying to stem the flow of weapons to Mexico. By all means let us help stop the slaughter in Mexico. They, too, are God’s children. But what about God’s children right here, in our own home?

Perhaps we tolerate this evil because of what one of the premier monsters in human history, Joseph Stalin, once cynically observed: “One death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic.” Or, to apply that to the slaughter on July 20th in Aurora, Colorado: 12 deaths are a tragedy; 30,000 deaths, the yearly toll in America, are simply a statistic. These walking, talking, sentient, flesh and blood Americans are just a statistic? Well, here is another statistic: last year 58 people were murdered with guns in the U.K. Please reflect on the comparison with our situation; actually, there is no comparison. We win the gold medal for indifference to human life, hands down.

Now I ask: when will you take action? When will you demand that the “statesmen” or “stateswomen” who represent you enact the laws necessary to protect you and your family and your friends? And not token changes to existing weak laws, but robust laws that would dramatically reduce the risks of being shot to death that Americans live with every day. Yes, you must accept that you and your loved ones are at risk, just as much as the innocents in the movie theater in Aurora were at risk; just as much as the 30+ Americans murdered every day were at risk. Consider this: if that daily average of murdered Americans applied on July 21st, then more than twice as many Americans were shot to death the very next day after Aurora as were killed in the rampage in the theater. This is an outrage. And the outrage is the failure, or outright refusal, on the part of most, but not all, of our “statesmen” to acknowledge the humanity that the “statistics” represent. The mass murderer Stalin understood that and drenched the soil with blood. We are collectively allowing his cynical observation to apply to our collective psyche.

Until Americans understand that the American gun manufacturers, importers, and distributors who fund the National Rifle Association are responsible for the terrorism that haunts American streets; that they are the abettors of the destruction of the lives of tens of thousands of their fellow Americans; and, that until Americans hold their “statesmen” responsible for failing to stop this evil and instead demand that they respond to their “consciences” rather than the NRA’s political threats, evil will continue to prevail. And death will be the price of that failure.

The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence has created an inter-faith group to fight for American lives against the power of the evil American economic interests which profit from these unjustifiable and unnecessary deaths. It is composed of representatives of many faiths, including a number of Catholic organizations. Let's do more than hope and pray that they succeed. Let's get involved. For as John F. Kennedy concluded his inaugural address: "...here on earth, God's work must truly be our own".

*Click [here](#) to read Ben Palumbo's "The Conscience of Statesmen" or to post a comment about either piece in the CACG blog.*