

Legally Speaking



Before Guns

By *Karen L. MacNutt*,
Contributing Editor

I was honored to travel to the Czech Republic with some World War II veterans last spring. Many people do not know that the American Army liberated much of the former Czechoslovakia from the Nazis at the end of World War II. Due to an agreement between the World War II leaders, President Roosevelt of the United States and Stalin of Russia, American troops withdrew from Czechoslovakia so that it could be occupied by the Communist government of the former Soviet Union. For almost 50 years the Czech people were behind the so called Iron Curtain, ruled by the local Communist Party backed by the Russian Army.

Facts that did not fit the Party line were not tolerated. The Czech

people were told that the Russian Army had liberated them. Those old photographs showing soldiers in American uniforms were, according to the Party, Russians in American uniforms. That is what the schools taught. Anyone who disagreed was disciplined. But the people knew who had

conquering Russian Army whose soldiers took what property they wanted and, with impunity, treated the Czech people as they wished.

Today, the Czech people honor the American soldiers who liberated their country. They celebrate their “independence” day



The walls around many medieval European towns, including this one in the Czech Republic, were designed to keep invaders out.

driven out the Germans. They knew who had treated them with respect. They knew the difference between the American Army and

with a massive “convoy” of Czech re-enactors dressed in World War II American, British, and Czech resistance uniforms. The convoy

recreates the American Army's liberation of Prague. It is a huge event with thousands of people lining the streets.

The celebration continues into the lush Czech countryside with the re-enactors "liberating" small farming villages as they follow the trail of the American Army's advance. Many villages look much as they must have looked in 1930 or, indeed, 1530.

If you tour the country, guides will lead you from the opulent palaces in the cities to the great mansions, castle like, in each major town. Many of these buildings were "nationalized" during the Communist regime and are now museums.

An observant American might reflect that all those great mansions were built by the same, small number of families who spent obscene amounts of money on multiple manor houses in different towns in an attempt to out do each other. The stories told of those families, are stories of kidnapping, forced labor, lust and exploitation of the common people. One has the distinct feeling that some of these people were not nice.

Until the 19th century, most people in central Europe lived in walled towns or villages. Armor, swords, pikes, and crossbows were kept in the fort or town hall to be used in case of invasion. Common people did not own such things.

Today, some people in the United States are obsessed with

the thought that common people should not have guns. They talk about gun crimes, implying that we could end crime and violence by banning guns. If they got their way—if we could destroy all guns—if we could wipe the knowledge of guns from the human mind—would the world be a better place?

We know the answer to that question. History tells us what the world was like before guns existed.

The book of Genesis describes the first recorded murder. Cain killed Abel with a rock. The cause was greed and jealousy, not the rock. Greed and jealousy is still a major cause of violence. Archeologists trace the progress of mankind by examining stone spearheads and the evolution of things such as spear-throwing devices, the sling, and the bow and arrow. The more advanced the stone tools, the more advanced the civilization. Archeologists see these tools as being used for hunting food. Hunting, however, was not the only use for the "tools."

According to the Bible, David, a man of inferior strength, killed Goliath, a man of extraordinary strength and size, with a stone hurled by a sling. This is an early example of someone being killed by a weapon capable of firing multiple objects in a short period of time. David had a pocket filled with smooth stones. Before killing Goliath, David had used his sling to keep wolves away from his flocks of sheep. You might say

that because David did not have to face Goliath in hand-to-hand combat where Goliath's personal strength would rule the day, and because David's sling could fire multiple stones capable of killing someone in a short period of time, that David had the equivalent of today's high capacity assault weapon.

The story of David and Goliath provides insight into the world before guns. David was a member of an extended family group called a "tribe." Goliath was a member of a different tribe or gang. Goliath's gang wanted the work product (the wealth) of David's tribe. The headman of Goliath's gang showed up with his followers armed with their clubs, rocks, spears, and such, to take by force all of the wealth of David's tribe. The headman (king) of David's tribe called on all the men of his tribe that were thought capable of fighting, to defend their flocks of sheep. Men showed up with whatever they could use as weapons and with whatever they could use to protect their bodies from the weapons of the rival gang. This protective clothing was called "armor." In the early days it was padded cloth, heavy leather, wood and such. David had been left to tend the sheep because only strong men were useful in these brawls. The tactic of the day was for the two groups to run at each other with whatever "weapons" they had. The last man standing was the winner.

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The winner took all the wealth (called loot or plunder) from the loser. Generally the males of the losing tribe (including infants) were killed and the women enslaved. What the winner did not want would be destroyed. A detailed example of this is found in the Iliad by Homer or the Aeneid by Virgil, both of which describe the sacking and destruction of Troy together with the slaughter of its people by the Greeks. Hundreds of years later, historians recorded how, after Rome defeated Carthage, not only was the city totally destroyed, but the land was covered with salt to insure the city would not be rebuilt.

The slaughter of children was common. The Egyptians ordered the death of Jewish male children not only at the time of Moses's birth, but at the time Moses asked Pharaoh to free the Israeli slaves. "Herod the Great," king of Israel at the time Christ was born, is said to have murdered his wife, his sons, and ordered the death of Jewish children all to insure no one would threaten his control of the throne. Power without accountability is capable of horrible things.

Historically people gained wealth by working for it or stealing it from others. Wealthy landowners built walls around their settlements to protect their property and workers from those who would steal valuables. Because fighting was mostly hand to hand, walls were useful.

The wealthy also hired mercenary armies for protection. It was not unlike today's private security guards at limited access residential or industrial developments. Poor

people lived in or near the walls of a town or a nobleman's castle where they could seek refuge in case of an attack. The nobleman wanted his followers to be armed but he wanted everyone else to be disarmed so that the people could not contest his authority. In contrast, "free" cities and republics tended to arm the entire population to defend the community.

The discovery of bronze allowed for the making of swords and better armor. A man with bronze weapons had a big advantage over someone with stone weapons. Iron replaced bronze for making weapons. Iron was expensive. The average farmer was hard put to afford an iron or steel sword and metal armor. Further, it took years of practice to learn how to use a sword. The advantage went to the largest and most physically powerful man, or the person who could hire the most physically powerful men. Weaker people paid tribute or protection money to the powerful (also referred to as "taxes"), in exchange for being able to live under their protection.

Settlements, be they manor houses or towns, always had walls with gates that were locked at night. An armed guard was on constant "watch" for gangs of men who might try to rob or sack the town. Travel was dangerous. The roads were frequented by bands of brigands armed with clubs. One wanted to be inside a walled city before its gates were locked at night fall. Today, the ornate gate towers are all that is left of most of the town walls in Europe.

The Greeks found that by

forming their soldiers into ranks, they had an advantage over opponents who fought as a mob. Philip of Macedonia perfected the Greek formation. He was a great king, which is to say, he was able to plunder most of his neighbors. He was murdered, with an edged weapon, by one of his own soldiers in the middle of his own army. His son, Alexander the Great, went on to conquer (plunder) most of the known world.

The Romans developed a military formation called the "legion." It depended upon well disciplined foot soldiers who fought in ranks with swords and shields. They also plundered most of the known world. An examination of the ancient monuments still visible in Rome gives testimony to how good the Romans were at plundering.

The early Roman Republic required all citizens to do military service but prohibited arms within the city itself. One day Julius Caesar, one of Rome's best known generals, entered the city with his troops and made himself emperor. There was no armed opposition from the people. No one in the city other than Caesar's troops had arms. Caesar's rule did not last long. He was stabbed to death by a number of unhappy Roman Senators outside of the Senate chambers. Few Roman Emperors who followed Julius Caesar died of natural causes. None were shot with a gun.

The advent of guns did not make an immediate change except to make armor obsolete. A single shot from a pistol could penetrate

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shoes are one of the finest pairs of footwear I and several women hunters/shooters use. You will find them to be virtually indestructible. You will not be let down with Lowa on your feet in the field or on the range.

Hopefully you will find some ideas for clothing to meet your hunting, range and lifestyle needs. As the hunting/outdoor industry continues to realize that women are a growing part of the business, you will find more and more clothing and gear to meet your needs. Thanks to all the companies and to Lisa for all the help in putting this article together. Without their support and input it would not have been possible.

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armor. A single shot pistol, however, was not useful against a gang of robbers. Even in the military, the single shot musket carried a bayonet so that after the first shot, the soldier could rush in and kill his opponent with an edged weapon. Cannons destroyed the usefulness of the walled city from a military point of view by 1600; but, the cavalryman with his saber was still the premier "assault weapon" of the day. As gun ownership became more widespread, especially in North America, the common man's dependence on government for protection decreased.

It was Samuel Colt's invention of the revolver, the high capacity gun of its day, that caused a huge shift in the balance of power. With two six-shot revolvers, the



Early armor and other deluxe equipment unavailable to most people, rendered this knight the "assault weapon" of his day.

frailest old woman was equal to a gang of ruffians. Physical strength was no longer a factor in self-defense. Since there was nothing obvious about carrying

a pocket pistol, there was no way of knowing who was armed and who was not. A man with a sword on horseback was no longer a thing to be feared, he was just a good target.

No one who is totally dependent upon someone else for his or her security is truly free. One could argue that the growth of personal freedom, including the expansion of civil rights to minorities and women, was nurtured by the availability to common people of guns capable of firing multiple shots.

Some might disagree with this interpretation of history. What is certain, however, is that the world without guns was not a nice place. As a matter of historical fact, it was an incredibly violent place.

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