
TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right. *By Joyce Lee Malcolm. Harvard. 248 pp. \$29.95*

What Congress meant by the Second Amendment may be the most controversial question in modern constitutional debate. "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," the amendment reads. The mystery lies in the relationship between the clauses: Is the right to bear arms limited to militia members, or does the first clause merely offer one compelling reason why every citizen must be allowed to own a gun? Malcolm, a scholar of 17th-century English history, explicitly declines to take sides in the modern gun-control debate. Yet she argues that we cannot answer its fundamental question without understanding the former colonists' philosophical debt to the motherland.

In preindustrial England, most subjects believed that an armed populace was the only safeguard against the ambitions of a power-hungry monarch, and, despite a law limiting private ownership to wealthy landowners, most households contained guns. The majority of Englishmen also believed that any standing army posed an outrageous threat of despotism. Yet in the late 1660s, Charles II, cynical and insecure after his father's execution and his own exile, amassed England's first standing army. Partially in response, Parliament soon passed England's first Bill of Rights, which specifically declared the right of all Protestant subjects to keep arms for



their defense.

The American colonies went beyond English law: Colonists were required to carry weapons when traveling outside towns and attending church. (The exceptions, of course, were Indians and slaves; it was a crime to sell them firearms.) The terror of standing armies also persisted, especially when the redcoats did not disband upon the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763. Drawing up constitutions during the Revolutionary War, the individual colonies explicitly condemned standing armies and made provisions for a popular militia. But there was disagreement as to individual rights to firearms. While Massachusetts declared, "The people have a right to keep and to bear arms for the common defence," Pennsylvania included personal defense, stating "that the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and the state."

When it came to drafting the federal Constitution, the Founders debated an amendment that read: "That the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and their own State, or the United States, or for the purpose of killing game; and no law shall be passed for disarming the people or any of them, unless for crimes committed, or real danger of public injury from individuals." Ultimately, though, they approved the Constitution without a bill of rights.

The Founders, of course, also granted extensive control to the central government over both the standing army and the state militia. These provisions provoked outrage during ratification, but in the end, many argued, if the people remained armed the standing army would never be able to enforce unjust laws. Yet disagreement continued over whether the right was to be for collective or individual protection. The House drafted one version of the Second Amendment based on states' proposals. The Senate, paring out wordiness (and choosing not to include the phrase "for the common defense"), cut the amendment to its current concise abstruseness. As Malcolm writes, "At each stage of its passage through Congress the arms amendment became less explicit . . . and brevity and elegance have been achieved at the cost of clarity."

Still, Malcolm believes that the Framers and Congress meant to protect individuals' right to arms for self-defense and to guard against tyr-

anny: "The argument that today's National Guardsmen, members of a select militia, would constitute the *only* persons entitled to keep and bear arms has no historical foundation." How modern Americans should act on this conclusion she declines to say: "We are not forced into lockstep with our forefathers. But we owe them our considered attention before we disregard a right they felt it imperative to bestow upon us."

BUDAPEST AND NEW YORK: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930. *Ed. by Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske.* Russell Sage Foundation. 416 pp. \$39.95

In 1870, Budapest and New York were rising stars of urban modernization. During the following 30 years both acquired world-famous bridges and subways, substantial new populations, and all the trappings of modernity. Moreover, their economies outpaced those of their closest urban rivals. Yet while the next 30 years made New York wealthy and cosmopolitan, an avatar not just of America's but of the world's future, Budapest settled into economic stasis and a reactionary torpor. What happened?

It's tempting to blame Budapest's political system, a nearly ossified centralized government with limited suffrage (under five percent of the population voted). But according to Bender, Schorske, and the 14 other historians who contributed to this volume, politics was not the only reason, or even a major reason, for Budapest's stagnation. In fact, a brief phase of relatively progressive politics, from 1900 to the failed Revolution of 1919, had minimal effect. Rather, the historians argue that New York's success depended on its ability to produce and retain diversity, while Budapest floundered because of its virulent xenophobia, which produced widespread resistance to cultural innovation.

Ethnic difference forced on New York's institutions, from its local government to its construction industry, the sort of resourcefulness and flexibility that remained essential to the city's ever-evolving infrastructure. For example, Central Park evolved out of a contest of various civic interests: Frederick Law Olmsted's patrician vision of a zone of rural tranquility became, under public (i.e. ethnic) pressure, the home of brass

bands, working-class crowds, and a zoo. The heterogeneity and chaos of mass-market newspapers and avant-garde art were vital in founding a new urban order precisely on "moral and intellectual disorder." In the new newspapers—read by Bowery workers and uptown aristocrats alike—limerick contests that drew more than a million responses ran side by side with Will Durant-style philosophizing and pious exhortations about poverty.

Meanwhile, Budapest was being "Magyarized." An influx of rural Hungarians at the turn of the century had the effect of driving German-speakers and Jews out of the city and stifling modernization in the commercial and public spheres. City parks and other sites of social mingling never flourished in Budapest. From 1900 on, Budapest's literary and cultural scene (aside from a tiny, virtually ignored avant-garde) was ruled by various antimodernists who denounced the sinful excesses of urbanity or mocked its notions of progress. In one fictional account, the "woeful people of Pest" spend their lives selling each other antifreckle cream and preparations for perspiring feet. There was even a spirited campaign against something as innocent as the telling of jokes, which came to signify to the provinces how un-Hungarian the capital had become.

Why did petty provincialism and xenophobia exercise such a stranglehold on Budapest? In part because, as Hungary's capital, it was expected to remain somehow exemplary of the nation as a whole. Budapest was home to one of eight Hungarians and yet could never seem Magyar enough to satisfy most newly arrived Hungarian peasants. New York, by contrast, was never home to more than one-twentieth of the nation's population, and was capital only of a commercial and financial network that exerted an admittedly strong but still comparatively indirect control over America. Furthermore, being progressive, innovative, or forward-looking—traits that came to characterize New Yorkers—commanded respectful attention, even envy, from the rest of the country.

Curiously, for all of the talk of bigotry's effects, the historians who contribute to this volume bring up New York racism toward African-Americans only in passing. If the retention and toleration of diversity is indeed the essential