

## The Government as Malevolent Santa Claus Gary Mauser

Trudeau won the 2015 federal election by campaigning for an ever-expanding federal government with a grab bag of promises. Among the hundreds of jaw-dropping promises the Trudeau Liberals made during the campaign were assurances that they would eliminate crime and violence by repealing the Harper government's gun laws. Since the election, this is one of the few promises that has not been repudiated by the new government. Indeed, it was emphasized in the throne speech. We are back on the road to disarmament.

Apparently, the Liberals believe (or think the public believes) that government is akin to Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy, a benevolent god, happily bringing free stuff. However attractive such an idea may be, it is dangerously wrong. Nothing is free – all gifts come with costs. Government gains power by encouraging people to become dependent, much like a drug dealer who encourages a lifelong habit by giving out free samples and flattery. Will the government continue to be as generous once you have become addicted?

Don't get the wrong idea: some government is necessary. For instance, where would we be without the rule of law? As well, an impartial police force is undeniably important in controlling crime and violence. We also depend upon the government to guard our borders. Unfortunately, no government knows when to stop expanding. Too easily, government can grow too powerful and become arrogant. While some government is useful, even necessary, it remains true that a smaller government is much more preferable. Remember, the price paid for government delivering important services is the loss of individual liberty. What the government gives can be just as easily taken away.

The recently elected Liberal government poses an immediate threat to our gun rights and even our economic livelihoods. Ottawa promises to roll back previous relaxations of the gun regulations and to add further restrictions. This is incremental disarmament. No one knows where it will lead. Canada may remain a benevolent despotism, or it may not. In the 2016 budget, the government plunged Canada into massive debt. Based on airy promises, Trudeau plans to run deficits totaling more than \$115 billion over the next five years -- with no plans to get out of debt. Justin is following in his father's footsteps. It took three governments (Brian Mulroney, Jean Chretien and Stephen Harper) to finally pay off Pierre Trudeau's massive debt load. Who will be blamed when Canada runs into financial problems in the future?

Governments that promise more than they can deliver eventually run out of other people's money. Governments that run massive debts, every year, with no plan to balance the budget or pay back their debts, unsurprisingly, eventually crash and burn. The United States offers a glaring example. Obama was elected by promising economic miracles, but his promises collided with reality. Now, Americans are angry and looking for a scapegoat. Trump blames "illegal immigrants" while Bernie Sanders attacks "the 1 percent." No one knows what the future holds.

Things could get worse. A lot worse. In the 20th century many governments around the world that started as benevolent, in time, turned malignant. When it suited their purposes,

## The Government as Malevolent Santa Claus

Gary Mauser

some regimes even became murderous. The atrocities by Islamic terrorists, in both Europe and Iraq, as well as the slaughter of Christians across the Middle East, suggest that governments have not changed in the 21st century.

Desperate governments look for scapegoats. Back in 1900, few people would have predicted that Germany would virtually eliminate a minority in a genocide. Germany was a respected member of the international community; its Jewish citizens assimilated. But after losing World War I, the fledgling Weimar government couldn't provide financial stability, and Germany collapsed into chaos. When Hitler was elected in the 1930s, he used the well-intended gun regulations, instituted by the previous government, to confiscate firearms registered to Jews, whom he blamed for Germany's problems. The holocaust soon followed.

Germany is not alone in scapegoating minorities: in the former USSR, Stalin blamed "class traitors," Ukrainian nationalists, as well as "bourgeois reactionaries" for the problems of the Soviet Union; while Comrade Mao accused "counter revolutionaries" and "rightists" for his economic and political failures in China. The Khmer Rouge in Cambodia targeted "intellectuals," evidence of which was wearing spectacles. Canada too has a history of racism and scapegoating. During World War II, Japanese Canadians were summarily rounded up, had their property confiscated, and were put into internment camps. Less well known is that during the First World War, Ukrainian Canadians were interned and required to work for private industrialists. In the 19th century, Italian and Irish immigrants were disarmed and discriminated against (Blake 2012).

War is considered evil because of the death and destruction it causes. There are various estimates about how many people died in wars during the 20th century, but the most prominent authority, Professor Rummel of the University of Hawaii, estimates that during the 20th century approximately 35 million people died in wars – including both civilians and military personnel and those killed in undeclared wars such as the Korean war. That is horrible enough, but Professor Rummel also calculates that, during that same century, governments intentionally murdered many more civilians than were killed in all the violent conflicts combined.

Approximately 262 million people were deliberately murdered by their own government during the 20th century, not including war deaths (Rummel 1994). The best estimates are that, in addition to war casualties, the Nazis (National Socialists) murdered about 21 million people, over 8 million of whom were Jews; the Russian Communists murdered at least another 62 million, including political opponents and Ukrainian farmers starved to death in the Holodomor. Under Mao, the Chinese Communists murdered approximately 76 million political opponents and rural populations. Unfortunately, these are not isolated examples. Even the Allied Democracies, primarily the United States and the United Kingdom, participated in mass murder. After World War II, the Allied democracies...

... turned over to Soviet authorities more than 2,250,000 Soviet citizens, prisoners of war, and Russian exiles (who were not Soviet citizens) found in the Allied zones of occupation in Europe. Most of these people were terrified

## The Government as Malevolent Santa Claus

Gary Mauser

of the consequences of repatriation and refused to cooperate in their repatriation; often whole families preferred suicide. Of those the Allied Democracies repatriate[ed], an estimated 795,000 were executed, or died in slave-labor camps or in transit to them. (Rummel 1986)

The foregoing puts current concerns about violent crime into perspective. During the entire 20th century, criminals (outside of government) are estimated to have murdered a between 8.5 to 10 million people (Necrometrics).

How could governments kill so many people? Many factors play a role, not all of which are understood. Certainly, economic conditions can be crucial. When a government that promises more than it can deliver eventually runs out of other people's money, politicians often find it easier to blame someone else rather than to accept responsibility. Democracy provides no protection. The people in their wisdom have often elected saviors to rescue them, only to discover that they have chosen tyrants. As well, scapegoats are more likely if there is a convenient minority to blame, such as the rich, recent immigrants, or perhaps, global warming deniers. It's not clear what role ethnic diversity plays in this process, but certain groups seem to be singled out more than others. Unfortunately, disarmed scapegoats are more easily rounded up.

Don't be fooled by politicians' promises. They are just fishing for votes, and, naturally, bait always hides a hook. Trudeau came to power by promising more than he can deliver, but to keep his base happy he needs to deliver something, and, unsurprisingly, that will be more gun restrictions. After the next terrorist atrocity, Trudeau will need a convenient scapegoat. Instead of cracking down on Muslim criminals, I predict he will blame peaceable gun owners and continue to disarm Canadians. As Obama's former White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said, "never let a serious crisis go to waste." It is reassuring to believe that genocides could never happen here.

### References:

- Brown, R. Blake. *Arming and Disarming, A history of gun control in Canada*. 2012  
InfoUkes. *Internment of Ukrainians in Canada 1914-1920*  
<http://www.infoukes.com/history/internment/>
- Guns. Liberal Party of Canada.  
<https://www.liberal.ca/realchange/guns/>
- Necrometrics. *Estimated Totals for the Entire 20th Century*.  
<http://necrometrics.com/all20c.htm#Murders>
- Rummel, Rudolph J. *Death by Government*. 1994  
<https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/20TH.HTM>
- Rummel, Rudolph J. War Isn't This Century's Biggest Killer. *Wall Street Journal*. July 7, 1986. <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/WSJ.ART.HTM>