ForeWord Reviews

Every Handgun Is Aimed at You: The Case for Banning Handguns
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"The United States does not have a gun problem," the author asserts, "it has a handgun problem." So many Americans are killed and wounded by pistols, argues Sugarman, executive director of the Violence Policy Center, that nothing short of an outright ban will stop the bloodletting. His evidence, while sometimes repetitive and often tedious to plow through, is persuasive. Sold to the public as ideal instruments of self-defense, handguns are statistically more likely, the author contends, to become instruments of impulsive homicide, and self-destruction.

Easy access to handguns leads to all sorts of calamities, as Sugarmann sees it. Because they are glamorized by movies, television, and video games, children find them irresistible—even in the face of the strongest parental warnings and precautions. People who might be deterred from suicide seldom get a second chance at life after they've picked up a handy handgun. Domestic disputes that turn violent can become deadly if a handgun is nearby.

Owners also face this dilemma: A pistol cannot be kept unloaded and stored safely away and still be instantly available for self-defense. Thus, to guard against one danger is to court another. Even those who fancy they must keep handguns as a defense against Big Brother government must realize that these short-range and notoriously inaccurate weapons are virtually useless against modern implements of war.

As Sugarmann points out, legal handguns are just as deadly and prone to accident's as illegal ones. He provides a useful chart of "Selected High Profile Shootings in the United States, 1963-1999," which demonstrates that (a) most involved handguns, and (b) that most of the handguns were legally purchased by or for the shooters.

The author's reasoning, while logically impeccable, will be severely tested by America's long and irrational romance with the handgun. Nonetheless, he does offer a common-sense ten-point program for turning the tide—from getting rid of one's own handguns to creating voting blocks to ban such firearms locally. This is an indispensable handbook of argument and action for those who've had enough.

Edward Morris