

No pity for Pettigrew

The foreign minister's experience of what it's like to be a simple, victimized citizen is one he can learn from



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In a Dec. 31 front page headline, Montreal daily *La Presse* asked: "Was Pettigrew Careless?" For the foreign affairs minister did not have a bodyguard with him when, like a humble and disarmed citizen, he was assaulted in a Montreal subway station. Although not much is known about the double aggression (a Good Samaritan coming to the minister's rescue was also assaulted), it appears it was not politically motivated. The

alleged aggressor is a 24-year-old black man who has no criminal record, but he's no Einstein either: he told the judge he agreed with submitting to a psychiatric evaluation if it was "for the good of society."

Don't count on me to shed tears on a minister downgraded to a simple victimized citizen, after being an accomplice to a state that has spent a few decades crushing the individual's right of self-defence, humiliating us, and erasing the sentiment of individual sovereignty up to the point where most people can't even imagine that they could protect themselves.

As for the Good Samaritan threatened species, its members are, like the victims of crime, forbidden to carry any means of self-defence, and are thus unequal in a confrontation with thugs. We hear stories of witnesses to gang crimes being afraid to talk to the police.

The wicked 1977 Bill C-51 made carrying a handgun almost legally impossible (except for state agents). And the very first government order on prohibited weapons, issued as early as 1978, banned carrying mace against human aggressors. Obviously, the statocrats' target was self-defence itself.

In Canada as in England the message is received loud and clear by all thugs and bullies: individuals are defenceless. After decades of an increasingly severe regime, peaceful citizens have become defenceless in their minds, too. When somebody is killed by a bear in a forest or by a thug in Toronto, nobody can imagine that a life could have been saved if the victim, a friend, or a passerby had been armed. American economists John

Lott and William Landes estimate that, from 1977 to 1999, deaths and injuries from multiple-victim public shootings fell on average by 78 per cent when state governments decriminalized carrying concealed handguns.

Politicians should not have armed bodyguards. In case of danger, they should behave like us, their supposed masters: call the police or, if the police can't be there, exert the same right of self-defence as belongs to any individual. The praetorian units assigned to the politicians' protection could then be disbanded. If this idea had been implemented before June 23, 2001, it would have saved at least one life.

On that day, a perilous car chase occurred on a Montreal expressway. Driving the pursuing car was Jocelyn Hotte, an RCMP cop who worked as a politicians' and foreign dignitaries' bodyguard, the same sort of praetorian *La Presse* wants to see behind Pierre Pettigrew everywhere. The pursued car was driven by Hotte's former girlfriend, Lucie Gélinas, who was riding


with three male friends.

Shooting his RCMP-issued pistol from his moving car, Hotte pumped some 15 bullets into Gélinas's car.

The jury later heard the 9-1-1 recording of Lucie Gélinas screaming for help as Hotte was ramming her car and shooting. The three passengers could not return fire because, of course, they were not armed, since that would have been a Criminal Code offence liable to several years in jail. Lucie Gélinas was hit and killed. Her three passengers

sustained serious bullet wounds. Four years later, Pierre Mainville, one of the passengers, says about Hotte, "He got 25 years in prison and I got life in a wheelchair."

I bet that if politicians were totally downgraded to the rank of ordinary citizens facing violence, they would very quickly change the "laws" (so-called) that prevent us from defending ourselves.

Besides disarming their bodyguards and not allowing the statocrats' any special right or tool of self-defence, I would make another proposal, along the lines of the old Venetian custom. As economist Mancur Olson explains, "[T]he doges were followed in official processions by a sword-bearing symbolic executioner as a reminder of the punishment intended for any leader who attempted to assume dictatorial power." 

If politicians are in danger, they have to do like the rest of us and rely on the police for their defence