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Stiff Upper Lip, and Absolutely No Shame

by Scott McPherson

The British really ought be ashamed of themselves. But they're not.

In 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair's government banned all handguns and virtually all private gun ownership in the United Kingdom. It's not surprising that the crime rate went through the roof when the guns went into the bin.

But now, almost six years later, Blair's own Home Office is expected to release figures which "will show a record number of crimes involving firearms," wrote Jason Bennetto of the *UK Independent* (December 27). "Guns are being used to carry out revenge shootings between rival gangsters and drug dealers, for robberies, muggings, and even as fashion accessories among young men out to impress."

"The Metropolitan Police announced last week," the report continued, that "it was setting up full-time armed patrols in trouble spots and dramatically raising the number of firearms officers it employs. The move follows an increase in shootings in London, particularly between competing crack cocaine dealers and, more recently, heroin traffickers."

In the same vein, an Associated Press report in the *Washington Times* (January 7) mentioned the fatal shooting of two teenage girls, the previous week, in the city of Birmingham. "Latisha Shakespear, 17, and Charlene Ellis, 18, were killed when they were caught in the middle of a turf war between rival gangs," the AP reports.

After decades of chiding Americans about the need to "reform" our gun laws, and our supposed Wild West mentality, the British completely legislated away the average citizen's right to own a gun — and, by extension, his best means of personal defense. In an aftermath of rising crime (particularly gun crime) and violence, one could hope they might reconsider their vicious anti-gun mentality and move to repeal their failed laws.

Instead, the British government is proposing a gun amnesty during which, for three months, Britons will be able to hand in any illegally kept guns and all replica firearms (which are increasingly being converted into real guns — the law of unintended consequences strikes again) without fear of prosecution. At the same time, Blair's government is proposing "a minimum five-year prison sentence for anyone caught with a handgun or automatic weapon, both of which have been outlawed for years." (AP)

A gun amnesty and the threat of a five-year sentence to combat violent gangs armed with machine guns and carrying out revenge shootings and turf wars?

Sure. That'll do it.

Perhaps it's just too much to ask for people to admit they've been wrong. Homicides and gangland shootings, handguns and automatic weapons — how could any of this be, in the land of the gun-free? We can only hope to live to see the day when the average English citizen complains to his member of parliament, "But they all own guns in America, and look how low their crime is compared with ours!"

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