

Police use of expanding bullet questioned

Police departments across the country are switching to a hollow-point or expanding bullet very similar to the "dum-dum bullets" outlawed at the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899. Ironically, the United States was not a party to that conference declaration because its delegates wanted a more severe bullet limitation adopted.

The use of expanding bullets by police forces seems unnecessarily devastating and inhumane. The bullet has the dum-dum bullet's characteristic ability to expand on hitting the target, often tearing an unusually large hole in its victim.

The U.S. Army Field Manual prohibits the use of such expanding ammunition because it causes unnecessary suffering.

However, numerous state and city police departments, as well as five out of six federal agencies, have changed to the hollow-point ammunition from the traditional, and less destructive, round-nosed bullets, according

to a survey made by The Christian Science Monitor this summer.

Hollow-point bullets are issued to agents of such agencies as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, Secret Service and U.S. Customs.

The Lincoln Police Dept. has used the hollow-point bullet for about six years, according to Lt. Gene Armstead, planning officer.

Those police departments which have opted for the hollow-point ammunition—from Dallas to Lincoln to Seattle—defend it largely on grounds of greater "stopping power" or "knock down capability."

They add that the bullet is less inclined to ricochet, or to pass through a target, thus reducing the risk of hitting bystanders.

Another argument used in favor of the hollow-point bullet is that, because a police handgun is used only as a last resort and then

with intent to kill, the severity of the wound is irrelevant.

But the definition of "last resort" varies enormously from one police force to another, and frequently, that definition seems too encompassing. And, too often, panic can induce an officer to use a more destructive weapon than actually is necessary.

The American Civil Liberties Union rightfully contends that the policeman's objective in resorting to a gun should not be so much to kill as to immobilize by hitting the target in the middle.

Using expanding bullets almost insures that any bystander hit by a misplaced shot either will be killed or seriously hurt.

So it's that weapons which nations outlaw in war are not outlawed in this nation's streets.

Banning the use of expanding bullets by police forces and other agencies would be a beginning toward de-escalating armed violence in this country.

Jane Owens

'Things sure could be worse'

Reading Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's bestselling text on Russian prison camps, *The Gulag Archipelago*, while America is trying to decide whether or not former President Richard Nixon should stand trial is an interesting experience.

If nothing else, one's bound to come out of it saying, "Thank God, Nixon's Nixon and not Joseph Stalin, and this is the U.S., not the U.S.S.R.!"

But comparing the life and hard crimes of Stalin and his NKVD (Soviet secret police) with the deeds of Nixon and his aides can lead one beyond the statement, "Things sure could be worse," to some serious thoughts about justice.

Critics of the 1973 Watergate hearings, for example, call them a farce.

Farce? What about the theatrical "Moscow trials" of the 1930s? When seven million Russians—from party leaders to peasants, and most of them innocent—were tried, convicted and sentenced on phony charges and made-up evidence, all based on a Secret Criminal Code no one ever saw (or dared to question).

By comparison, it took a year and a half of tiring debate over the same four words, "high crimes and misdemeanors," and some 55 volumes of tape-recorded evidence, to take even a vote on Nixon. And that on whether this one man even should be brought to trial.

Defendants in Stalin's trials, like putty in his hands, confessed to crimes they'd never even heard of. "Dumfounded, the world watched . . . expensive dramatic productions in which the powerful leaders of the fearless Communist Party . . . now marched forth like doleful obedient goats and bleated out everything they had been ordered to . . . and confessed to crimes they could not in any wise have committed."

Nixon, against an ever-skeptical public, stubbornly kept to his line, "I'm innocent," right up to his resignation.

For sending millions to death or animal-like torture in prison camps, the deranged Stalin lived to old age and died a national hero.

For saying swear words on tape and hiding the truth to save his own skin (both human reactions), an American president can be harassed, bullied and subpoenaed out of office as Public Enemy No. 1.

"How long are you going to continue to have people shot?" a reporter once asked Stalin.

"Just as long as I have to."

How long will the American public keep after the former president?

At the same time a Russian under censorship risks his life to print the cruelties of arbitrary justice, you'll see comments like these running loose in America: "Nixon ought to be hung by his thumbs."

"I think Nixon and Agnew ought to be lined up against the wall and assassinated."

Harmless? Maybe, but consult Solzhenitsyn about really being hung by the thumbs; it's bound to be in there somewhere with the rubber truncheon beating and needles under the fingernails.

Kind of all leaves in one's mouth a foul aftertaste of too much milk and honey . . . spoiled by our freedoms?

But more broadly, it leaves one with the idea that true justice—anyone's brand—is, of necessity, objective. Impersonal impartial, objective.

A fragile concept not to be distorted or bent by dictators or obstructed unlawfully by presidents. But neither should it be abused by a powerful, self-righteous public opinion machine sitting in judgment.

"If only it were so simple!" Solzhenitsyn writes. "If only there were evil people insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them."

"But the line of good and evil cuts through the heart and soul of all of us. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

And if that doesn't hit home, take heart that it's still true: Things could be a lot worse.

nancy stohs
second thoughts

Charity toward all—amnesty necessary

Editor's note—Jim Balters is a senior majoring in psychology and zoology.

By Jim Balters

"With malice towards none, with charity towards all." Abraham Lincoln hoped to reunite the United States after the American Civil War with those words. Would anyone call that an idealistic statement? I hope not.

America has vanquished the enemy regularly throughout its history whenever there was a call to arms. Not too long ago Americans were overly generous in helping the former foe rebuild and start over as if nothing had happened.

On the eve of his asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, Woodrow Wilson, often classified as an idealist, remarked that once a people are led into war, they forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance.

However, it seems to apply to Americans only when they don't win. The United States didn't trounce the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese as its various commander-in-chiefs said it would. America didn't win that war. Many feel that it lost—that it lost badly. Because it didn't win, the United States has not offered to help in the rebuilding of Indochina.

America has found itself unable to welcome its sons and brothers back home because they were men of conscience. They were men of the caliber of Washington and Jefferson and every other founding father and revolutionary who realized that only by dissenting could they live with themselves. To immediately forgive the Japanese, Germans and Italians after World War II—people who actually waged war against the United States—and not to reactivate a group of countrymen who refused to wage war against a people who posed no threat to America shows a twisted morality.

My brother was killed in Vietnam in 1967. He wasn't drafted, and I don't know just why he joined. From what he told and wrote me, I really don't think he thought it was America he was fighting for.

guest opinion

He didn't fight out of superpatriotism—my brother knew Lyndon Johnson was a liar. My brother fought and he died, and I can't find it in me to be angry with anyone who refused to answer his country's "call."

I just wish they could come home because this country doesn't need the assorted criminals which once composed the federal and various state governments before these sycophants recently were flushed away.

Men and women strong enough to answer the call of their conscience are the ones America needs and the ones America cannot afford to lose. This includes those who truly felt it was in the best interest of America to fight in Vietnam.

Let the war-evaders come home completely free. One might argue that it wouldn't be fair to the families of those who died, but the best thing to do for the relatives of those killed is to put this war totally behind us. This can't be done when a segment of our country is forced unjustly to live in exile. For this we need not malice—only charity.