

Guns for Sale NYTimes AUG 23 1971

In Brooklyn, a gun killed a sixty-year-old candy store owner because he could not fill the gunman's order for apple pie. In Queens, a plainclothes policeman was shot to death in an attempt to foil a luncheonette holdup. In the Bronx, a hotel manager was cut down by a disgruntled guest in a dispute over a room key. In Manhattan, a patrolman, called to settle a dispute, escaped death only because a gun pointed at his back misfired. Beno Spiewak, the Brooklyn murder victim, had survived the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp only to be cut down by the horror of a society gone gun-crazy.

All these incidents took place within 48 hours. Each involved a handgun for whose possession there could not have been the remotest justification. Each instance underscores the deadly consequences of the continued blindness on the part of the Administration and Congress to the need for effective gun laws.

Homicides in the city have increased by 30 per cent over the same period last year. The largest number of violent deaths—367 in all—were the result of shootings.

The Gun Control Act of 1968 prohibits the importation of cheap revolvers, or "Saturday night specials." But the law has been rendered ineffective because it still allows parts for these guns to be imported for assembly in the United States. In addition, there is a thriving domestic manufacture of these cut-rate murder tools. The Administration, even as it expressed shock over the earlier killing of policemen, rejected the call for legislation.

Earlier this year, Senator Edward M. Kennedy introduced a bill to require the registration and licensing of all gun owners and to ban the sale, importation and possession of those handguns which are generally used in holdups. Senator Birch Bayh has now joined in the battle against the "Saturday night specials." As Congress returns to work, it should move quickly to enact legislation to help stop the wanton killing.