Column/Thomas T. Huang

On gun control and troubled minds

From his teens onward, he pulls out a Uzi semi-automatic machine pistol. He feels the gun jerk back as the bullets find their mark. His family scatters out the front door, fleeing. The gunshots resound, popping like firecrackers, through the hallway, then into the streets of Dorchester neighborhood, breaking the peace of the night.

He tracks the moving targets, the clay pigeons, the bullet-proof hus, aunt, uncle, cousins, and their wife and girlfriend, a baby. He thinks of the blood that flows away with the pain and the frustration—all validated by a gun permit handed to him by the state’s Department of Public Safety.

His aunt and uncle had helped his parents escape from Vietnam States from a refugee camp in 1979, but he became angry when his relatives accused him of stealing money from his aunt’s bank accounts. With a gun, this 23-year-old man new hope to face.

Life is not so different for Minh Le. As Minh Le falls into a sidewalk, bleeding, still.

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Something has cracked in this life. Many feel so far from the American nightmare of his own making. But the fact that he has fashioned into a rifle, he sees the kill. His cousin’s girlfriend lies dead on the neighbor’s porch across the street. The 3-year-old baby daughter of another cousin lies on the concrete sidewalk, bleeding, still.

He walks over to the prone body of the mother, Tui Vao, at the corner of Newport Street and Crescent Avenue. She has some- how survived the round that hit her there, wounded. Standing over her, Minh Le hovers at point-blank range.

Perhaps he has seen this before, in a war movie, or in street fighting in the fallen city, Saigon, during by rogue, gas-toting soldiers of different races and nationalities, all this somehow reenacted in the southern sections of Boston. Cut-trimmed cruelty brought there like a tide, not by a young Vietnamese immigrant, but by a young criminal who has learned the American ways of doing business—a violence facilitated by soft gun control laws.

In May, 1986, he told the Boston police and a couple of federal law enforcement agencies that he had uncovered a Libyan plot to kill the president, evidence of his instability. Yet, on June 16, 1987, he was able to obtain a gun permit from the Department of Public Safety. Nine days later, he bought a machine gun at Roche’s Sporting Goods in Porter Square, in our very own town, Cambridge, MA.

A curious check into his background came up with nothing that indicated he had been unstable in the past. He was given a special alien permit to possess and buy any gun short of 7000 permits given out in Massa- chusetts alone.

But the fact that it was a per- mit for resident aliens is ironic. The point is that anyone and his mother can get a permit and buy a Uzi from a sporting goods store. For this young, trou- bled mind, the gun is the solution to his world, the gun is his weapon, the gun is his identity.

To all freshmen and incoming students: Welcome to The Hub. The Hub of the Universe, that is. If you don’t know, I’m talking about Boston. Even newspapers like the Boston Globe seem to think “Hub” is an appropriate abbreviation for “Boston.”

Does this make you as slightly egotistical? “Closed-minded!” The funny part of it is, a lot of the people you will meet here in Boston actually don’t seem to realize that the rest of the world doesn’t hold the largest city in New Eng- land quite so dear to their hearts. Perhaps you have seen, and laughed at, the poster titled “The Bostonians View of The World.” This poster shows everything west of Harvard Square as “Indian Country” and labels Fenway Park the center of all life, or some- thing equally silly. Unfortunately, I think some of the Boston resi- dents I have met wouldn’t get the joke.

I was in a class last term when the professor asked us if we thought “The Duke” — Guy Mc- chael Dukakis — would win the presidency in our home states. One student responded, “I thought John Wayne was dead. Dukakis may yet win, but he cer- tainly doesn’t have the sort of national stature that fellow Democrats Mario Cuomo, Diane Feinstein, and the late Richard Daley have achieved in their local politics.

But from the moment Gary Hart dropped out of the race, a large number of the Massachusetts residents started thinking that Dukakis — who was referred to by the Globe’s columnist as “The Last Honest Politician” — will win the election easily since he will storm through the New Hampshire primary. New Hamp- shire is the state where Sunbeam nucleur power plant has been, almost single-handedly, kept out of operation by “The Duke.”

The actual truth, and I was very surprised to see that the Globe actually printed this (once) several months ago, is that a Duk- kakis win in New Hampshire will be somewhat discounted nation- ally because it’s his home territory. A loss, or even a close race, will seem as devastating.

Why am I going on about this? It’s just that I really feel that I realize that I seem to be moving further and further from the real world. I hear over and over again about the trials and tribulations of Mayor Raymond Flynn and his garbage burning plant, but I didn’t hear anything about the MX missile malfunction until editorial comes out about it showed up in our office.

You will notice a tendency in the local papers to rank national and international news below lo- cal news. Note that this is suppos- ing or indeed different from any- where else. What is surprising, however, and what you may not notice, is that they sometimes tend not to report outside stories at all.

The front page of Wednesday’s Globe had five local stories, one national story about the Pope and our international story (about the Persian Gulf war). On the same day, the New York Times ran a local or in- ternational stories, including those that were not in the first section of the Globe at all.

No secret that the out of state edition of the Times is a na- tional paper and the Boston Globe is local, but the fact that many Bos- ton residents don’t seem to realize this is indicative of the general attitude in the region.

I get so frustrated when you ask me (Please turn to page 2)