March 12, 2007 Last Friday a federal appeals court in Washington DC issued a ruling that hopefully will result in the restoration of 2nd Amendment rights in the nation's capital. It appears the Court rejected the District of Columbia 's nonsensical argument that the 2nd Amendment confers only a "collective right," something gun control advocates have asserted for years. Of course we should not have too much faith in our federal courts to protect gun rights, considering they routinely rubber stamp egregious violations of the 1 st, 4th, and 5th Amendments, and allow Congress to legislate wildly outside the bounds of its enumerated powers. Furthermore, the DC case will be appealed to the Supreme Court with no guarantees. But it is very important nonetheless for a federal court only one step below the highest court in the land to recognize that gun rights adhere to the American people, not to government-sanctioned groups. Rights, by definition, are individual. "Group rights" is an oxymoron. Can anyone seriously contend that the Founders, who had just expelled their British rulers mostly by use of light arms, did not want the individual farmer, blacksmith, or merchant to be armed? Those individuals would have been killed or imprisoned by the King's soldiers if they had relied on a federal armed force to protect them. In the 1700s, militias were local groups made up of ordinary citizens. They were not under federal control! As a practical matter, many of them were barely under the control of colonial or state authorities. When the 2nd Amendment speaks of a "well-regulated militia," it means local groups of individuals operating to protect their own families, homes, and communities. They regulated themselves because it was necessary and in their own interest to do so. The Founders themselves wrote in the Federalist papers about the need for individuals to be armed. In fact, James Madison argued in Federalist paper 46 that common citizens should be armed to guard against the threat posed by the newly proposed standing federal army. Today, gun control makes people demonstrably less safe-- as any honest examination of criminal statistics reveals. In his book "More Guns, Less Crime," scholar John Lott demolishes the myth that gun control reduces crime. On the contrary, Lott shows that cities with strict gun control--like Washington DC--experience higher rates of murder and violent crime. It is no coincidence that violent crime flourishes in the nation's capital, where the individual's right to defend himself has been most severely curtailed. Understand that residents of DC can be convicted of a felony and put in prison simply for having a gun in their home, even if they live in a very dangerous neighborhood. The DC gun ban is no joke, and the legal challenges to the ban are not simply academic exercises. People's lives and safety are at stake.
Gun control historically serves as a gateway to tyranny. Tyrants from Hitler to Mao to Stalin have sought to disarm their own citizens, for the simple reason that unarmed people are easier to control. Our Founders, having just expelled the British army, knew that the right to bear arms serves as the guardian of every other right. This is the principle so often ignored by both sides in the gun control debate. Only armed citizens can resist tyrannical government.