

75¢ NOVEMBER, 1969 PDC

**Gun
facts**

Gunfacts

THE MAGAZINE FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS OF THE GUN



***Combinations:
Old and New***

***Test: Flaig Rifle
Test: AyA Sidelock***

NUMBER TWELVE

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COVER PHOTO: Shown are three pairs of rifles and handguns that match in caliber. On the front cover is a Colt Single-Action in 44-40, paired with an 1873 Winchester in the same caliber. The nicked S&W Combat Masterpiece in 357 is paired with the 1892 Winchester on the back cover, a carbine gunsmithed to take the 357 Magnum also. The Ruger Super Blackhawk and the Winchester Model 94 are both available over the counter now, both in 44 Magnum. Photo by Ken Warner and Fred Davis on 4x5 Ektachrome using floodlights and overhead camera.

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You'll notice two things about this issue of Gunfacts right away: First, it is heavier and has more pages than the last; second, its cover date is November, not October.

The first change—more pages—is something we have wanted to do from the beginning. Our original choice of 48 pages for a monthly magazine was dictated by the amount of staff time available to do a proper job, and what we considered a fair ratio between advertising and editorial pages.

As you may have noticed last issue, advertising is picking up, and in order to continue to meet or beat all other magazines in the number of useful editorial pages we offer, we are replacing the material you "lost" by adding eight additional pages.

The other change reflects the pattern of newsstand sales. It just isn't useful for a magazine to be on the stands for only a week or so prior to its cover date. Please don't ask us why this is (because we don't know, either), but it is so. It is a slow and painful process inching the calendar back a couple of days at a time from issue to issue. We decided to take the bath all at once, and skip a cover date but not an issue.

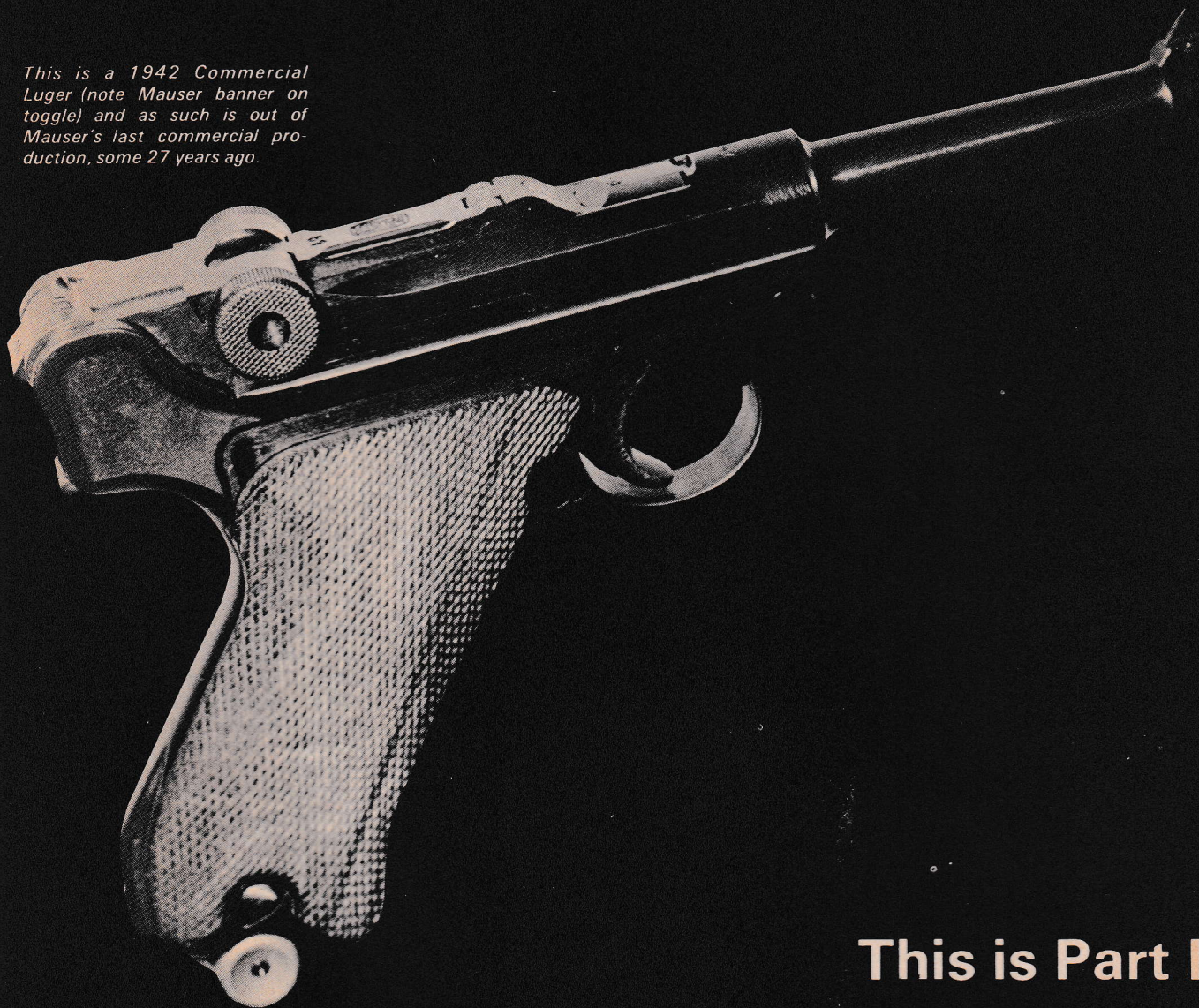
There is another change, too. Gunfacts will henceforth be published eight times a year—four "two-month" issues during the winter and spring, and four "one-month" issues during the summer and fall. Each of you subscribers has paid, you may have noticed, for 6 or 12 (or more in some cases) issues, and each of you will get every issue you paid for.

This printing schedule is going to be a boon to this writer. During the busy, busy times, the deadlines won't fall so fast; during the less busy time of the year, there's more room for editorial and publisher work, and thus the closer deadlines will be handled easier. We think you'll get a better magazine this way.

However, please note that there is no October issue, and that this is a November-December issue. That means you will—in the case of subscribers—next get Gunfacts in late November.

The Parabellum Story

This is a 1942 Commercial Luger (note Mauser banner on toggle) and as such is out of Mauser's last commercial production, some 27 years ago.



**This is Part IV
of Gunfacts' exclusive
series on the Mauser Parabellum
pistol, a post-World War II
rebirth of the P. 08 or Luger, a
gun they said would never be made again.**

THE PARABELLUM STORY

by Jan Stevenson



First two new Mausers show up as mighty Swiss indeed, with an incongruity here and there. Distinguishing feature is the milled receiver ring without beveling cuts. The 30 Luger is at top, 9mm beneath.

With the knowledge that Mauser had acquired, in December of 1967, all of the drawings and calculations that Waffenfabrik Bern had made in 1960 when drastically redesigning the Model 1929 pistol for possible remanufacture, the overriding question became, "To what extent would these alterations appear in the new Mauser Parabellum?". Accuracy, reliability, design correctness—all the points one usually ponders in testing a new gun—were of small interest, for the Parabellum is as old-hat as Boone's coonskin. We wanted to know mainly if parts from the new pistol could be fitted as replacements in older guns, and whether Mauser's new offering would be cheapened according to the Bern prescription.

The chance to answer these questions came in April, 1969, as the first two toolroom-built prototypes were completed by Chief Engineer Vorgrimmler's development department at Mauser's new facilities in Schramberg-Sulgen, about 10 miles west of Oberndorf.

To the first question, "Yes". The new Mauser internally duplicates the

Swiss M1929 almost exactly, thus Mauser will stand as a ready parts source for older Lugers. Sideplates of course will interchange only with the Swiss '29, and as previously noted, barrels and receiver forks will require extensive gunsmithing to swap. Other parts *should* interchange with normal hand fitting.

To the second question, "No". Bern had envisaged replacing all solid pins in the gun with hollow split pins, a la Winchester. They would substitute simplified two-piece parts for some of the single-piece machinists' horrors in the old Luger, and face-lift whatever was left. So far as I could determine, without the Swiss drawings in front of me, none of these changes show up in the new prototypes. Like Mauser says, the new pistol is a fair carbon of the Swiss 1929, and the 1929 itself was but little changed from the DWM '06. The reworked Swiss demonstration pieces which Mauser made up for the 1969 NSGA and NRA shows then gave an honest notion of what would be forthcoming.

The most interesting change concerns the machining of the receiver ring. The Swiss, as we've noted previously, lathe-turned it. This was cheap and easy, but it sacrificed a bit of frame engagement railing, left unsightly gaps at the prow, and the shoulder this operation created made stamping crests, coats of arms, and so forth on the receiver ring impossible.

The Germans had originally worked this part with two concave milling cutters. The first tool went in over the receiver ring, cutting the top contour until it came out about 2/3 of the way back, just ahead of where the toggle knobs would seat. A second, smaller tool was run in over the cut made by the first, but only for about half the length of the receiver ring. This produced the elegant bevels on either side of the ring, characteristic of all Lugers except for the 1929 Swiss.

The new Mauser prototypes dispense with the bevels, leaving the receiver looking like an aircraft hanger or a flat-walled Quonset hut. It's still an aesthetic improvement over the Swiss pistol, but we could wish for the more expensive tastes of older days.

Mauser probably figures they're well advised scrimping anywhere possible on the receiver fork, for it's a dog to build. It starts as a 555-gram (19 1/2 oz.) drop forging, losing in the course of 50 machining operations, over 75% of its original weight. The 51st cut, in Mauser's view, was the back breaker. Worksheets on the receiver fork call for no less than 45 inspections during manufacture. When I was at the plant in the spring, Mauser GmbH had two milling machines doing the first operations on some 550 receivers which were stacked nearby.

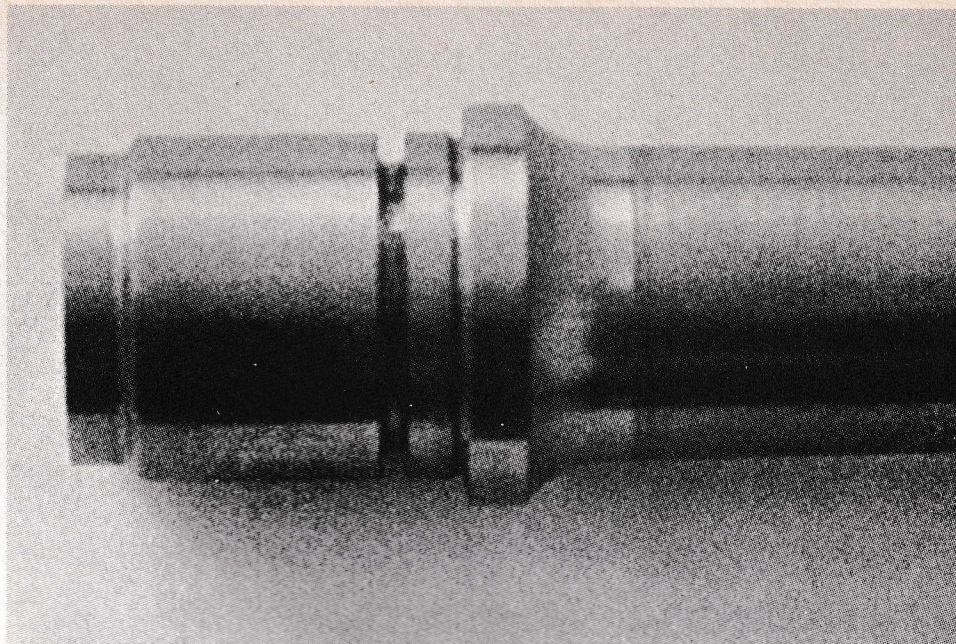
Another bit of redesign involves the barrel shank. In 1929 the Swiss discovered they could get much more accurate barrel-receiver alignment by leaving an unthreaded portion on the barrel shank just behind the flange to mate a matching surface in the receiver ring. The Germans had reached similar conclusions with the P-08. According to P-08 blueprints, the threading runs right up to the alignment surface, which was fine for the take-it-easy tooling of decades past. Mauser engineers, though, figured they'd be breaking a lot of cutters on their high-speed threaders if they tried to rip the tool out through that much stock at the end of threading. Thus they lathed in a 1mm groove to separate the threaded portion of the shank from the alignment surface. This enables the threading cutter to be disengaged in the air, so to speak, and also leaves the alignment surface standing free where it's much more convenient for grinding to precise diameter.

Exactly what problems all this will create for the gunsmith who wants to put a new barrel on an old receiver, I'm not sure, but it's something he'll have to worry about along with the fact that the new barrel shank, made to Swiss measurements, is 21mm long, while that on most 1906's, and all 1902 and P-08 pistols, measures but 18.85mm.

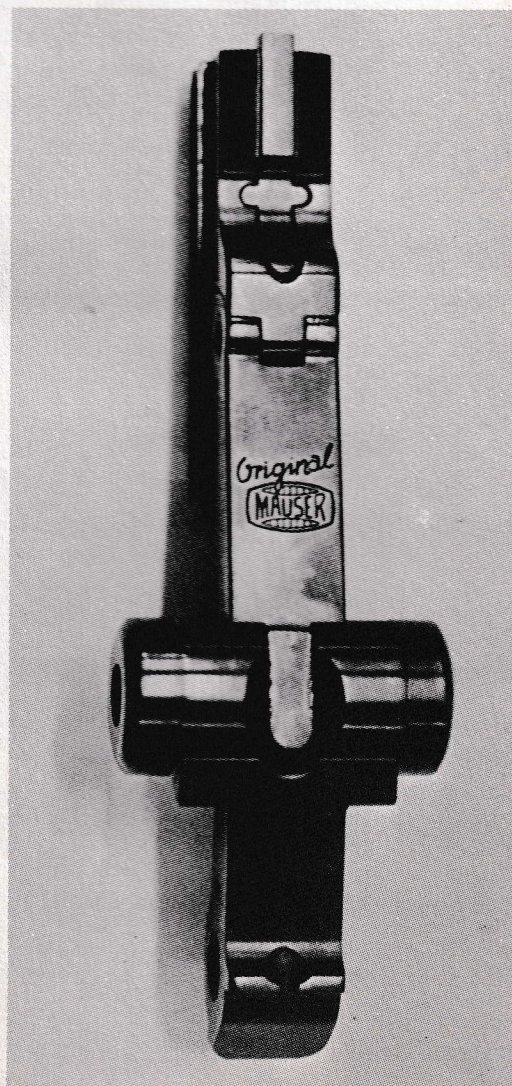
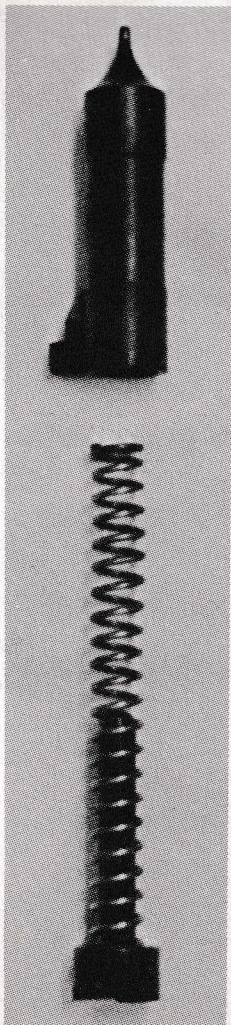
At the time of our last visit to Oberndorf, Mauser had two Luger prototypes ready, a 9mm numbered 11.0001, and a 7.65mm numbered 10.0001. We grabbed both for firing hours before they were scheduled to go in the deep freeze for sub-zero testing—a small portion of the arduous test program Mauser has mapped out before the gun goes into full production. Curious regime for an antique like this, but Mauser's going to anyway, probably because they anticipate military orders for the old warhorse.

There was loud reluctance on Mauser's part to let Gunfacts shoot these pistols—the same routine one gets from most manufacturers where prototypes are concerned, and indeed quite logical. The function of a prototype is to verify

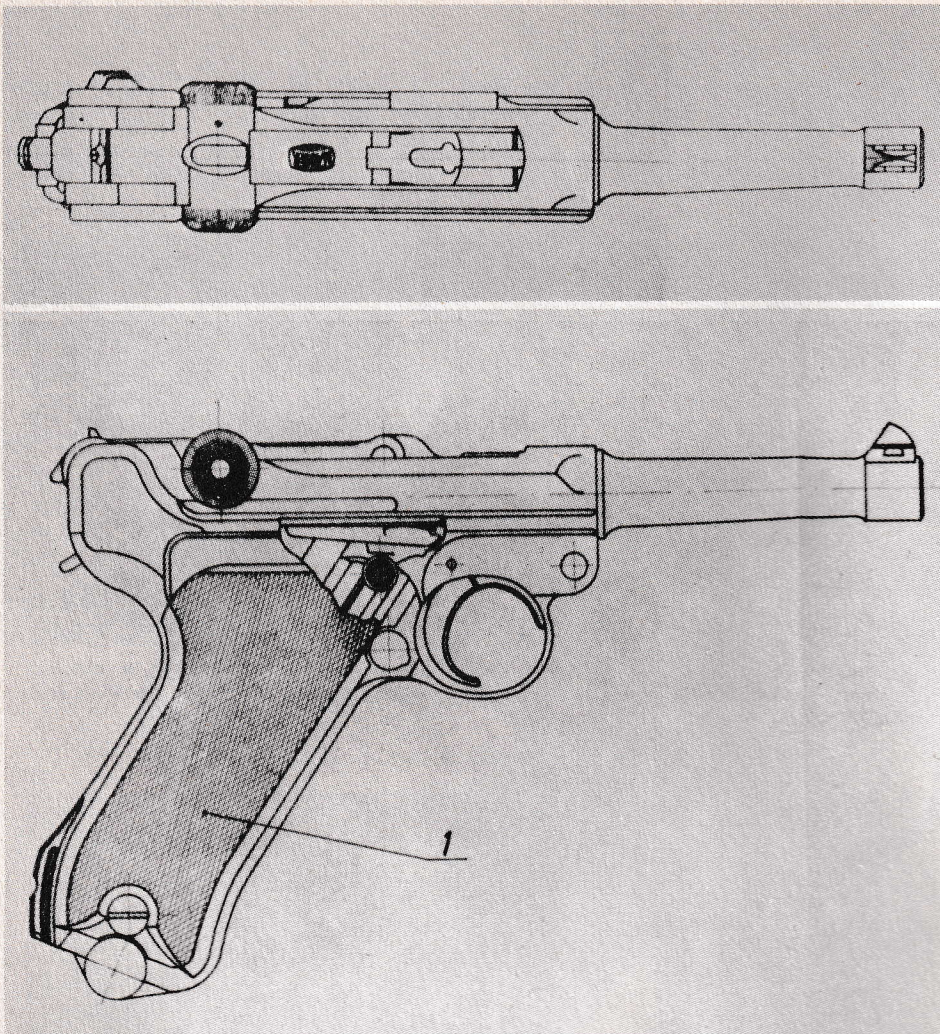
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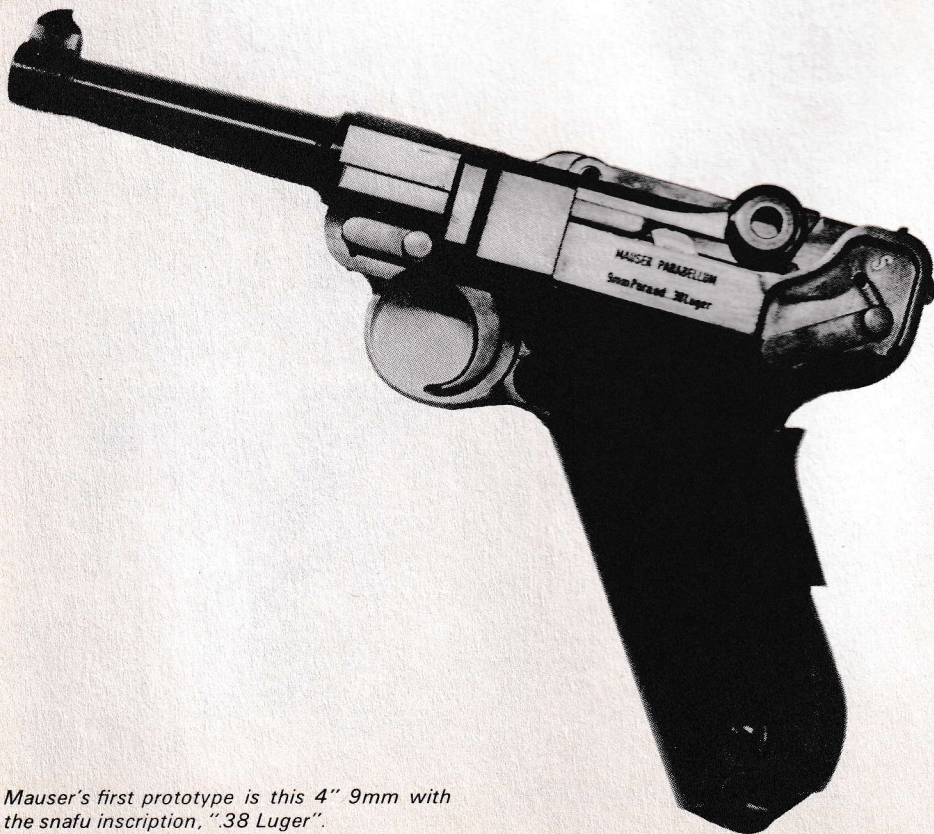
Brand new barrel shank shows 1mm lathed groove separating free-standing alignment surface and main portion of shank which will later be threaded. P-08 ran threading up to alignment surface.



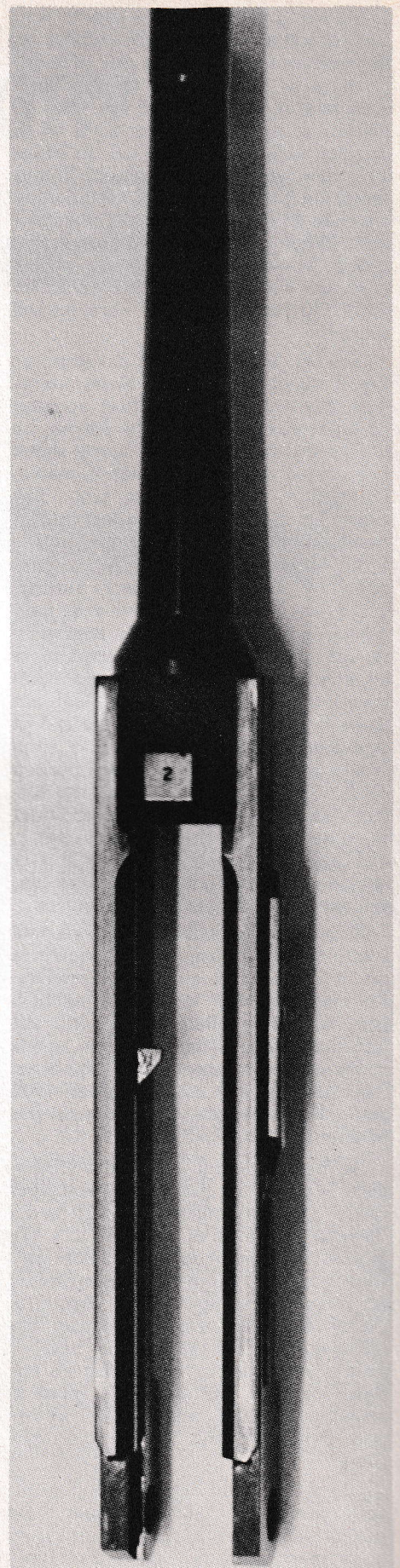
Breechlock, toggle linkage, and components recall the good old days.



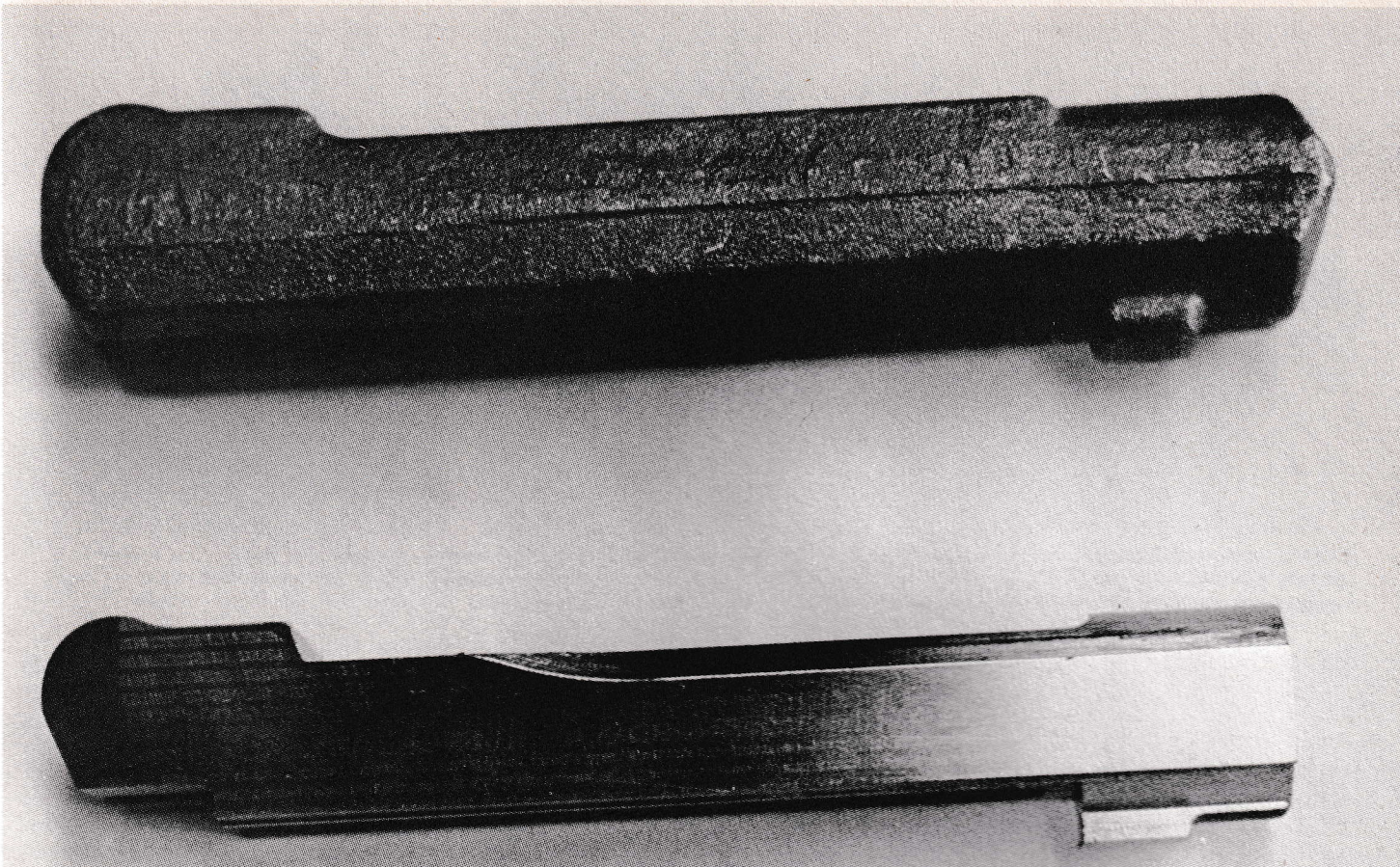
Features shown in this 1938 Mauser drawing of the P.08 are what Interarms wants in the new Parabellum, but first production runs won't have them all.



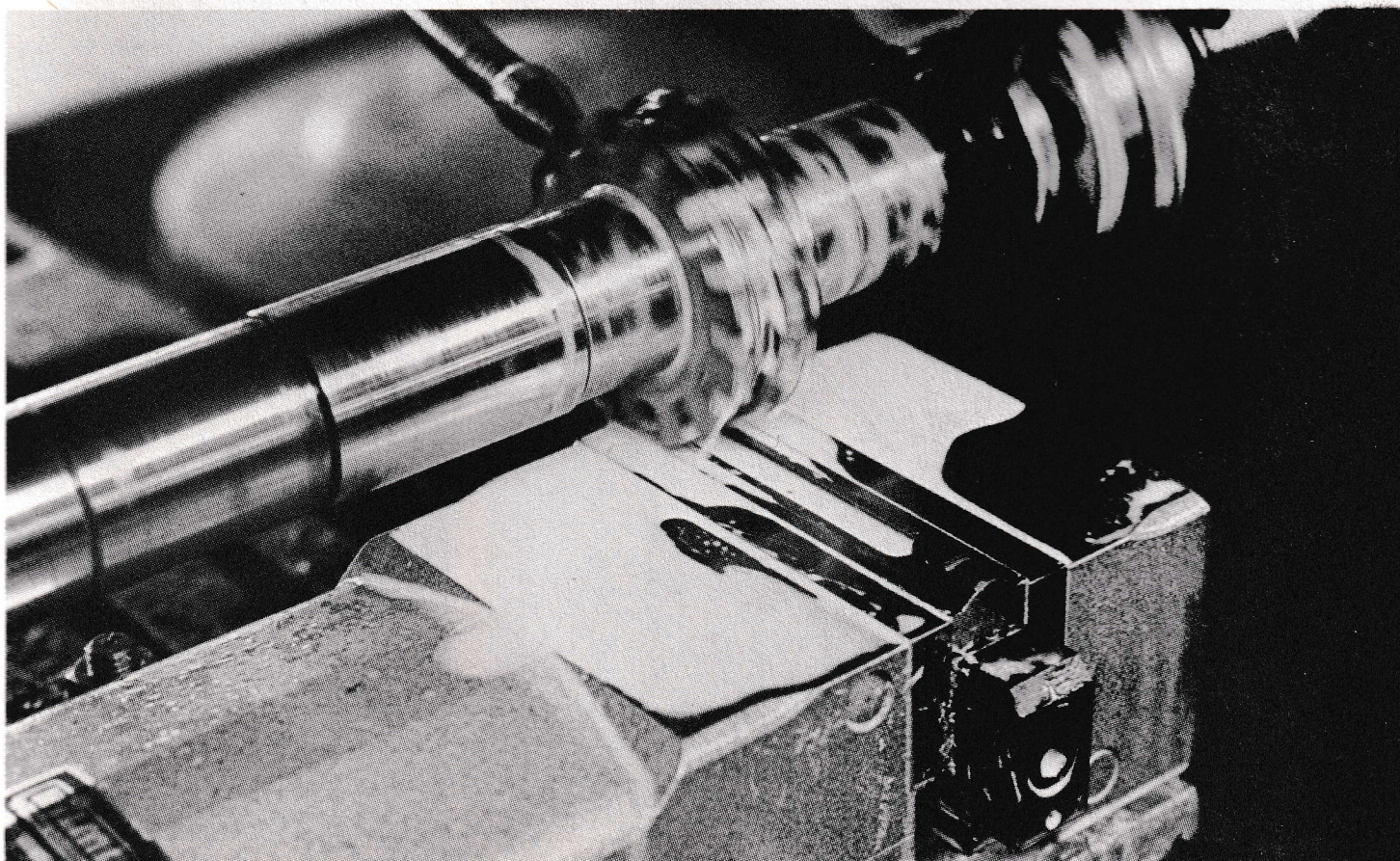
Mauser's first prototype is this 4" 9mm with the snafu inscription, ".38 Luger".



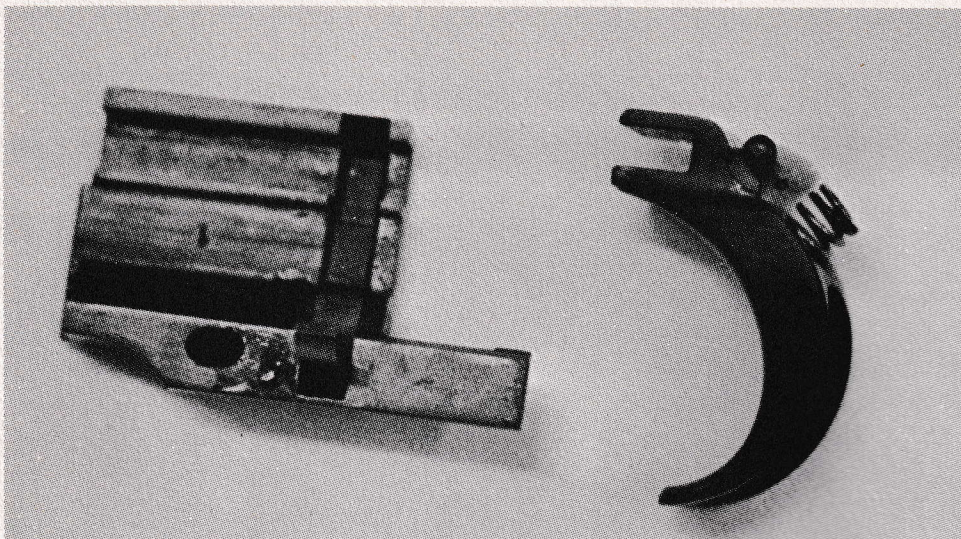
Square receiver lug was a trademark of the Swiss 1929. This one, workstamped "2", is on Mauser's 7.65 #1 prototype.



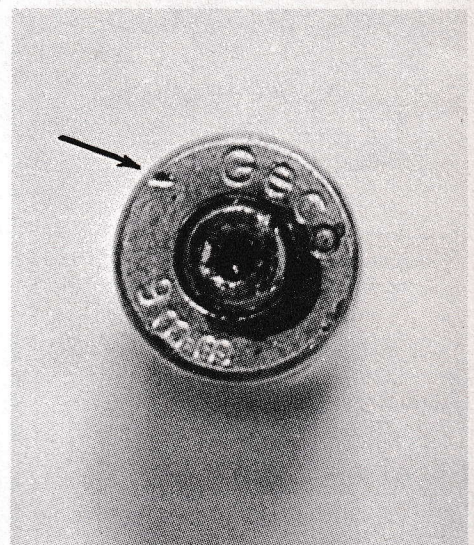
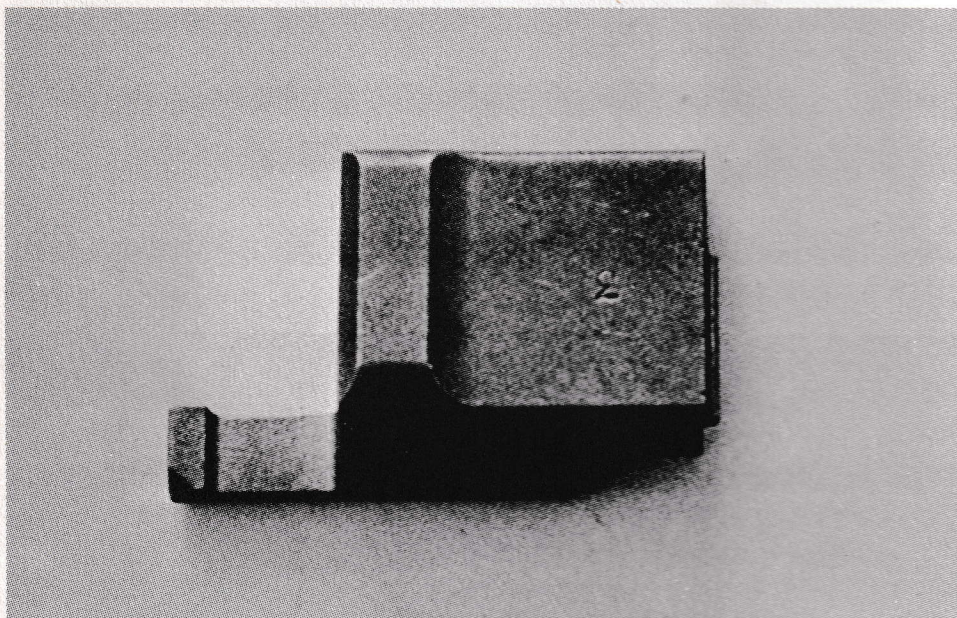
Receiver fork starts off as a 19-1/2-Oz. drop forging; loses over 75% of its bulk in work. Semi-finished mate shows how far work had progressed when Stevenson visited the plant late in April.



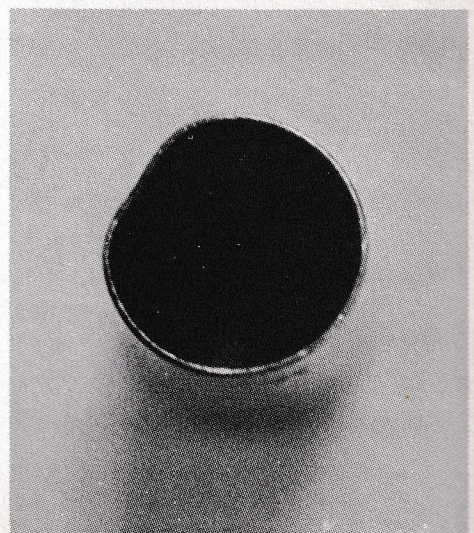
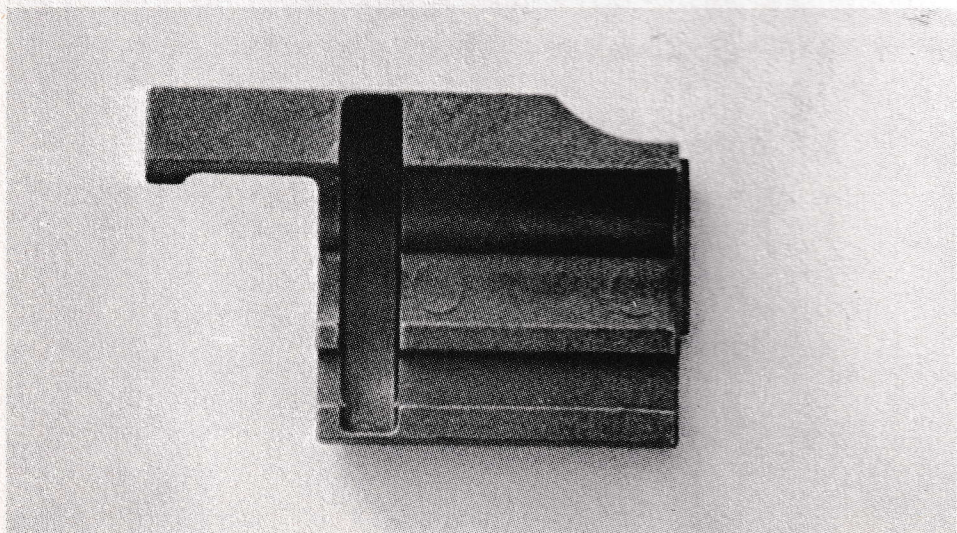
Receiver fork is built in Mauser's measuring tools division. Fifty operations (mostly milling) and 45 inspections bring it to finished form. Here it takes first milling cut on underside.



Sideplate and trigger from #1 9mm prototype shows how it looks when it comes out of the wash — it looks pure Swiss. Cast trigger will still take a worthy bit of machining to bring it to shape. Mounting pin diameter must be reduced, trigger bar engagement slot cut, and trigger spring mounting hole drilled. Then we polish, blue, and hand fit, not to count inspections. The Luger still costs money to build.



4-o'clock ejector imprint shows clearly on soft Geco brass. Case mouth is fated to be bashed in on the opposite side.



New Luger sideplate is investment cast, will interchange only with the rare 1929 Swiss; could just as well have been P-08 pattern. This is how it looks when it drops from the mold, before machining and polishing.

Flat-sided case mouth shows it hit the left receiver wall during ejection. With luck it will clear the port on the first bounce.

the blueprints. Some engineering calculations are bound to be off; the gun is expected to malfunction and such things will be corrected before production commences. Thus prototypes can be fairly criticized only on matters of general design—quite superfluous, of course, in the case of the Luger/Parabellum.

Malfunction they did. The 9mm gave 8 jams in 40 shots—all of them identical. The gun was feeding a bit high, and the round would snag on the top of the chamber. The engineers noted this, and doubtless production will see the feed lips lowered slightly, chamber mouth chamfer deepened, or such. Ejection was faultless, and there were no other hitches. The 7.65 went through 15 rounds without a bobble, at which point our trigger finger gave out.

A sweet pull, someone must have decided, was small virtue on a prototype. The trigger on the 9mm ran from 9 to 10 pounds and creepy. The 7.65 was too heavy to creep, weighing at 11 to 11-1/2 pounds. Either I was having an off day, or the triggers were too much to hack. My best group with the 9 was a 5-shot donut measuring 1 3/4", benched at 25 meters without elbow support. Average group size for all 40 shots, fliers included, was 3 1/4". Disregarding 4 fliers, the average for a 5-shot group shrunk to 2 1/2". This, while not perfectly disgraceful, was nowhere near as tight as it should have been.

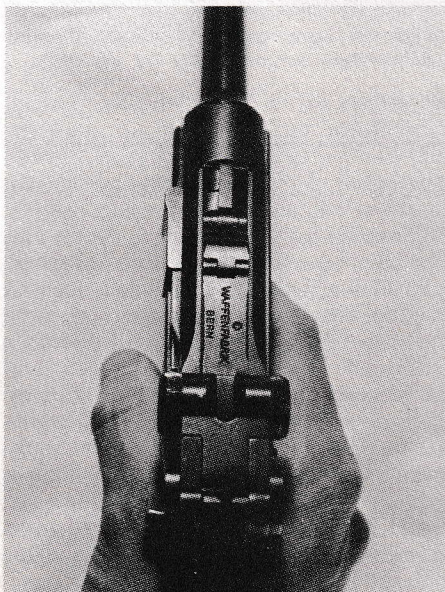
The 7.65 looked like a better shooter, but by the time I got to it my aching digit had already pressed some 400 pounds of gritty Parabellum trigger. The first 8 pounds went on fine, but the final 3-3 1/2 pounds of pressure would have the front sight vibrating in the notch. When I had to use two fingers on the trigger to get the last string off, I quit. Granted my condition, the 30-cal was giving interesting groups. The first target found three shots in 3/4", with the other two, close together, 2 1/2" below them. The next group was virtually identical. I gave up after the 3rd group, a 5" vertical string. Ammo was West German Geco in the 9, Remington in the 7.65.

Given a decent trigger, I think these guns would shoot. And Mauser says that production pistols will have as good a pull as the design permits, which is sometimes good. To fit the sintered sear, they've ordered diamond files (models 2112, 2122, and 2132) from Winter in Hamburg. These go for from \$5 to \$7 each and work like princes, Mauser foremen say, while standard files slide right off.

A visual examination of the two prototypes showed up some interesting details. The stocks were of the 06/24 Swiss pattern, flat sided with only the flats checkered, leaving maybe a 1/2"



Mauser's administrative offices are still in Oberndorf's crumbling Augustine Closter, as they have been for the past 3/4 century.



The Parabellum coming will share features of this 1929 Swiss Luger and those of P.08 and 1906 models.



Despite prosperity, depression, and disaster, Mauser's front door has hardly changed at all.



This much is left today of the Schweden-bau, where all Mauser handguns were made from about the turn of the century on. The fitting room was at attic level, with production departments on the first 3 floors.



Mauser's D-bau survived the postwar dynamite binge. All Luger production will be moved here by 1971, and parts will be trucked to the Schramberg-Sulgen facility for assembly and test firing.

MAUSER'S PARABELLUM SERIAL NUMBER SYSTEMS

All numbers start with a caliber prefix. "10" stands for 7.65, "11" is 9mm, and "12" will be the centerfire 22 caliber. So far there are three distinct series. Whether Mauser intends to launch a new series for forthcoming models such as the 8" and 16"-barreled guns is not known. They could, or they could just carry through with the production series as it stands now. Military orders will probably be numbered in separate series.

SERIES 1— Swiss M1929 pistols rebuilt as Mauser display pieces. Identified by a double-0 after the caliber prefix, numbered from 10. Thus, beginning with the first gun of the series: 10.00.10, 10.00.11, and so forth. Still foggy as to exactly how many were made; probably less than a dozen and probably no 9mm's.

SERIES 2— Mauser prototypes. 2 finished and 3 more in work. Numbered from 0001. Thus: 10.0001, 10.0002, etc., and 11.0001, 11.0002 etc. Pilot run will probably carry through in this series.

SERIES 3— Production pistols; numbered from 1000. Thus: 10.1000, 10.1001, 10.1002, etc. and 11.1000, 11.1001, 11.1002, etc.

border to slope down and meet the straps. This aesthetic *faux pas*, says Mauser, results from their decision to use pressed checkering with positive (point upward) diamonds. They have to have a reasonably flat surface against which to press, hence the slab shape with the wide borders. They would have preferred, they said, to use hand checkering and run it all the way to the straps as on the P-08, but costs for this sort of work were out of reason. No reactions were forthcoming when I pointed out that the P-08 stocks had been machine-checked, and they could do it that way.

(Curiously, the stocks on both guns had been inletted for the long Swiss 1929 grip safety, and then filled in with plastic wood to match the length of the new Mauser safety.)

The 9mm with its fat, stubby 4" barrel brought to mind the 1902 Model. It was a nice looking gun. The barrel was almost untapered, and a tight radius cut brought it down from flange diameter. The left side of the frame was stamped "9mm Para od. .38 Luger," reflecting an innocent Germanic faith in Anglo-Saxon logic. Since we translate 7.65 to 30 Luger, they figured that being reasonable folks, we must give the 9 the same treatment. By now they've discovered we don't, so maybe this amusing inscription will die aborning. Meanwhile the noble 9 has briefly acquired a new name—in Germany. ("od." is short for "oder," which means "or" in German).

The 7.65 sported a 4 3/4" tube—strange since 4 and 6 inches are supposed to be the forthcoming lengths. I would have suspected that they had pirated a pipe from a Swiss pistol, but this barrel plainly seemed toolroom built. It came down from flange diameter in a straight, abrupt taper, which was thoroughly unsightly, and we hope that later guns will show a radius here. *(Editorial Note: Late Swiss replacement barrels do resemble the barrel Stevenson describes.)*

Neither gun had been proof marked, and the absence of superfluous stamps was pleasing. The polish was nice, and the bluing was adequately rich. All told, these were handsome guns, very close to elegant, and the first of a hundred thousand or more to come.

The Luger is finally back, and like an old friend we welcome it and forgive its faults. Or most of them anyway.

**ADDITIONAL
COVERAGE
NEXT ISSUE**