

GUNS & AMMO

DECEMBER 1964 50c
IN CANADA 60c

THE .300 MAGNUM

WHY IT MAY BE THE 'ALL-AROUND RIFLE'

GUERRILLA GUNS

THE VIET CONG 'FORGE' THEIR OWN

.45 AUTO

VS.

9MM LUGER

(PAGE 46)

THE WINCHESTER

21

LAST OF AMERICA'S
QUALITY DOUBLES?

HANDLOADING TIPS

WHAT THE MANUALS DON'T TELL YOU

G&A FIELD TESTS:

ITHACA'S NEW SHOTGUN
BUSHNELL 2.6X PISTOL SCOPE
THE NEW DAKIN TRAP GUN



GUNS & AMMO



THE COVER: This month's cover of *Guns & Ammo* represents a controversy that has raged since these two handguns first met in the trenches during World War I. Both handguns used in our tests of "The .45 Auto Versus the 9mm Luger," were "as is" issue firearms. The Luger is a Code 42 made by Mauser in 1939. We obtained it from Tom Gilbert of the Brass Rail gun shop in Hollywood, California. Tom has been collecting Lugers for some 20 years. This was a "for sale" shooter and was not one of the 150 specimens in his collection. The .45 auto is a U.S. issue M1911A1 and was obtained from the Director of Civilian Marksmanship some years ago by one of the members of our staff. Photograph by Bob D'Olivo.

VOL. 8, NO. 12

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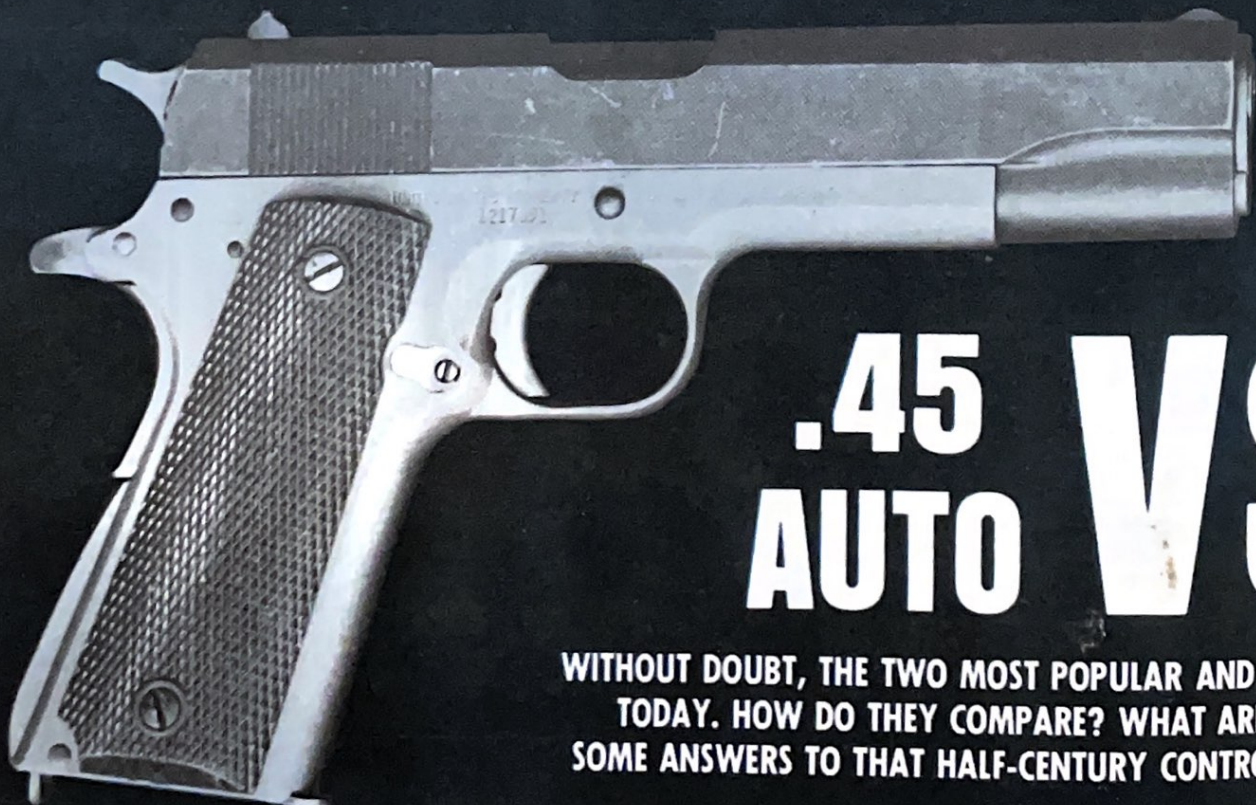
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Practical police tests by G&A Handgun Editor Jeff Cooper (right) and handgun veteran Jim Sullivan on automobile bodies, comparing penetration of the .45 Auto and 9mm Luger, leaves little doubt as to the superiority of the big .45. Note how standard 230-grain .45 bullets penetrated door and upholstery. The Luger was erratic.

One of the most gratifying things about small arms, to the enthusiast, is their permanence. • A good gun is good almost regardless of its design date, at least over the span of a human life. • In an age when most things made last year are obsolete today, this is a very attractive quality. • For example, much of the country in which I used to hunt as a boy is now completely "developed" — plastered over with tract housing, defoliated, and spoiled — but the old rifle I used to hunt with is just as neat, precise and powerful as it was when Mary Pickford was "America's Sweetheart" and before the first television station had been heard from. • The pistol I carried in two wars rests on my desk as I write, and nothing to supersede it has been produced to this day. • Transportation, communications, entertainment, clothing, food, architecture, medicine — even mathematics — have all been completely transformed since the days of Teddy Roosevelt and Kaiser Bill, but not small arms; particularly not pistols. • Thus it is that the handguns with which U.S. and German troops faced each other in 1917 are just as popular today as they were before two thirds of the readers of this piece were born. • The 1908 Luger and the 1911 Colt have become as much of a tradition among shooters as the 1873 Winchester and the 1903 Springfield, and, in the case of the 1911, the traditional is still the best available instrument for its purpose. • The Luger and the Colt (I shall hereafter refer to the U.S. Pistol, caliber .45, Models of 1911 and 1911A1, as the "Colt")



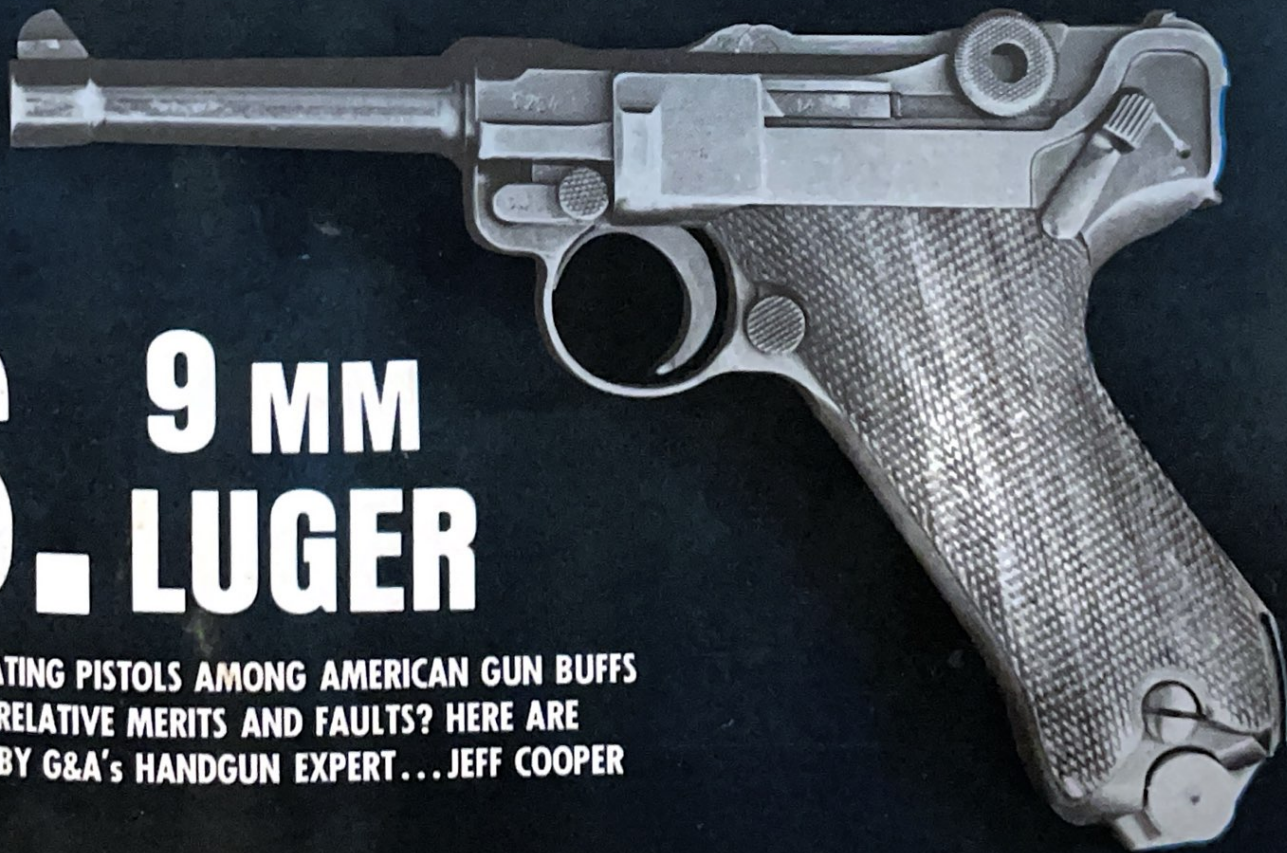
.45 AUTO VS

WITHOUT DOUBT, THE TWO MOST POPULAR AND FASCINATING HANDGUNS OF THE 20TH CENTURY ARE THE .45 AUTO AND THE 9MM LUGER. TODAY. HOW DO THEY COMPARE? WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS TO THAT HALF-CENTURY CONTROVERSY?

were, with the broomhandle Mauser, the earliest dependable semiautomatic pistols of any power. • Since the general acceptance of the self-contained metallic cartridge, people had been investigating the principles of semiautomatic operation, but reliability remained the stumbling block just about to the turn of the twentieth century. • Since the primary reason for a pistol is the defense of one's life, a pistol one cannot count on is no pistol at all, so the revolver remained the only serious hand weapon throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. • (A surprising number of people who ought to know better are still under the Victorian impression that an auto pistol is "unreliable.") • Then, in 1896, Mauser brought out the renowned 7.63 Military Model (affectionately called the "broomhandle" for reason obvious to anyone who has handled one) and the high-power semiautomatic pistol, with its obvious advantages over the venerable revolver, became a practical weapon. • The big Mauser was an instant and world-wide success, and has since been seen in the hands of everyone from Winston Churchill to the Smersh assassin in the latest James Bond movie. • It was reliable, it was accurate, it was powerful, it was ingeniously designed and beautifully constructed. • And it was fiendish looking. • Generations of stage and cinema producers, when they wished to attribute strange and sinister powers to their villains, handed them 7.63 Mausers. • But the Mauser was oafish. It was dangerous the way Frankenstein's



The difference between the 124-gr. 9mm bullet and the 230-gr. .45 Auto is apparent (top). Despite the 9mm's 1120 fps muzzle velocity, as compared with 850 fps for the .45, the latter carries a far greater punch as indicated by impact results on a 1/4-in. steel plate. Compare the bullets after the test — quite an eyeopener!



9 MM LUGER

COMPETING PISTOLS AMONG AMERICAN GUN BUFFS
 FOR RELATIVE MERITS AND FAULTS? HERE ARE
 THE ANSWERS BY G&A'S HANDGUN EXPERT... JEFF COOPER

.45 AUTO VS. 9MM LUGER

monster was dangerous, not like Sugar Ray Robinson. It was too big, too awkward, too heavy, and too clumsy to be the preferred companion of any sophisticated shooting man. As a technical breakthrough it was magnificent, but, rather like the V-2 rocket, it's more of a scientific *tour de force* than a really useful tool.

It was, however, only a matter of a short time until the pioneer was followed by the second generation, and here the leader was the Luger. The Luger had practically all the advantages of the Mauser, offsetting a slight decrease in power with far greater reloading speed, and besides it was *handy*. The Luger is light, compact, and graceful. It is a true sidearm, not an abbreviated carbine. It swept the field.

The Luger action, originally developed by the German-American, Hugo Borchardt, is of particular ingenuity and tremendous strength. It was borrowed from the concept of Sir Hiram Maxim, another American whose brilliance was "without honor in his own country." (It is curious to note that our native weapon-wrights, with the exception of Sam Colt, are rarely appreciated in the United States. Borchardt, Browning, Maxim, Christie, and to a large degree Colt himself, all had to go abroad to achieve full recognition.) The essential principle of the Maxim-Borchardt-Luger action is the toggle lock, or "knee-joint." This is composed of three longitudinal elements in line, jointed, so that when in line they resist thrust in compression, but when deliberately forced out of line they permit easy longitudinal movement. The foremost element moves only fore-and-aft. The second element is "free" and moves both fore-and-aft and in rotation. The rearward element is fixed at the rear but moves in rotation when the middle element does. Thus when the piece fires, the barrel and all three elements of the locking system move straight to the rear under spring tension. While the bullet remains in the barrel the breech is rigidly locked shut in such a way that the solid steel longitudinal elements would actually have to be compressed upon themselves in order to blow the action. Obviously the barrel would burst sideways before this could happen.

Then, when the bullet has left the barrel and gas pressure has dropped to that of the atmosphere, the rearward inertia of the moving parts forces the extensions of the pin joining the two rearward locking elements against twin cam ramps which "break" the knee joint. In the Maxim machine gun the break is downward, but in the Borchardt and the Luger the joint breaks



The Luger is famed for its superb balance and "pointing" qualities. Most of the weight is centered directly over the hand making the pistol distinctly muzzle-light.



The .45 Auto has a narrower, slab-sided shape with a muzzle-heavy distribution of weight. It does not have the natural pointing qualities of better-balanced Luger.

upward. In both, the barrel and the rear pivot of the rearward locking element stop at this point, while the bolt proper continues straight to the rear and the two rearward elements flex out of line. This action is unique in small arms. It is solid, positive, and limited in strength only by the metals of which it is made. It is also prohibitively expensive to manufacture (by today's standards) and very sensitive both as to the nature of its operating thrust and as to the intrusion of foreign matter such as grit, dust, or earth. A Luger needs just the right ammunition and spotless cleanliness in order to function reliably.

The singular action of the Luger requires other departures from conventional pistol design. No hammer is used, either internal or external, and the coil-type mainspring drives the firing pin in a straight line. This makes necessary a complicated linkage between the trigger and the striker which almost precludes a crisp trigger pull. I once examined a Luger that had an excellent trigger. That was 30 years ago and I have not found its mate since.

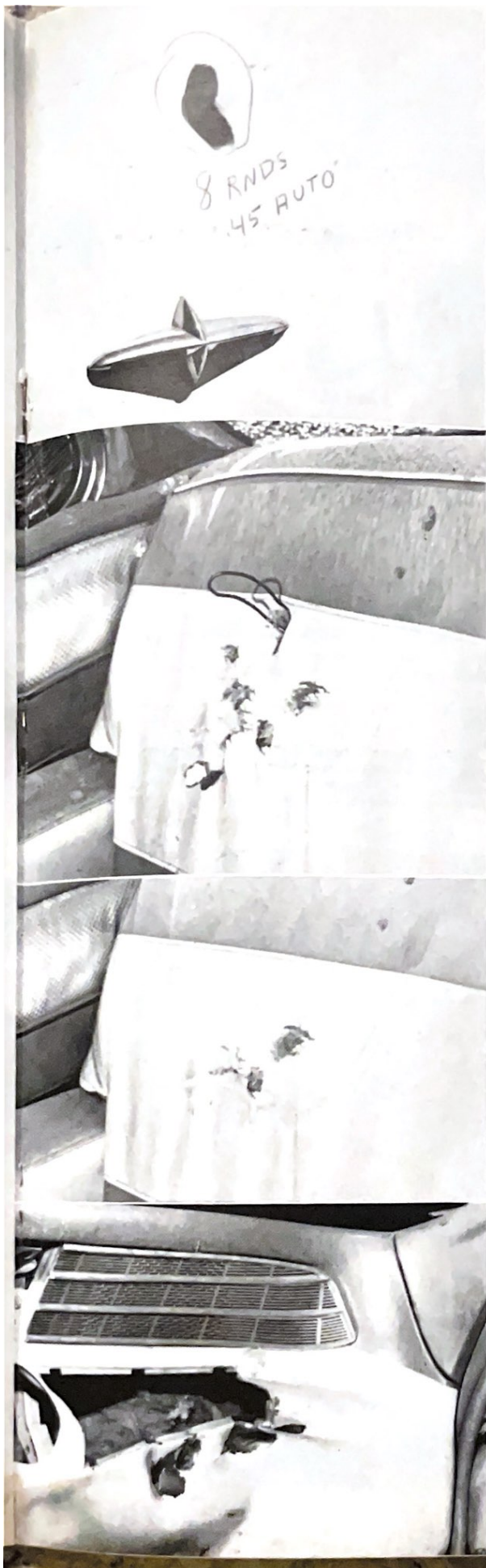
The toggle lock is the essence of the Luger design, and the reason why the pistol was never successfully imitated. The other basic actions can be duplicated by one-horse machine shops in Peking or Kabul, but the Luger action can only be made by experts. Recently a correspondent asked me where he could get ammunition for his "Japanese Luger." What he had was a Type 14 Nambu, which is about as close to a Luger as beer is to cider.

The need for a larger caliber led to the introduction of a .36 (.38") Luger which was officially adopted by the Imperial German Army in 1908. (The .30 Luger was adopted by the Swiss in 1906.) The cartridge was the now famous 9mm Parabellum, one of the most

widely used pistol cartridges of all time, and still today the official pistol and submachine gun cartridge of NATO. "Parabellum" means "for war" in Latin. The term has been applied both to the Luger pistol and its 9mm cartridge, but today chiefly to the latter. The cartridge is a good one, similar in potential to the .38 Special and factory loaded with a lighter bullet (124 grains) at higher velocity (1050 fps). It is a smokeless design, with a small, straight case and a rimless head. It delivers less stopping power than the .38 Special due to its hard jacket and semi-pointed design, but has greater penetration.

In 1907, Georg Luger submitted an exact replica of the .30 Luger, but in .45 caliber, to the U.S. Army trial board, as the U.S. had given notice that it would consider only a big caliber weapon for heavy military duty. This pistol was tested under the supervision of the manufacturer, using ammunition which he himself provided, and showed 12 failures of the mechanism, 31 "jams," and four misfires in 1022 shots. This performance was deemed unsatisfactory and the .45 Luger was rejected, but the blow was softened by the immediately subsequent acceptance of the 9mm Luger by the Germans. Presumably the 9mm version passed its reliability tests with colors flying, for in due course it was officially adopted by the governments of Holland, Portugal, Brazil, and Bulgaria, as well as by Germany and Switzerland.

The 1907 trials resulted, as all pistol shooters know, in the adoption by the U.S. of the Colt .45 Model of 1906. Certain reservations about the 1906 brought about the improvements incorporated in the 1911, which has been our service sidearm ever since. The Mauser proved that an auto pistol would work, the Luger proved that such a pistol could also be handy, and



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1. The interesting series of photos at left show another penetration test made on an auto body with the .45 Auto. Eight rounds were grouped into the trunk lid as closely as possible at five yards.

2. Seven 230-gr. slugs penetrated the rear fire wall and emerged through the back seat. Note the projecting spring and dispersion of the group. One .45 bullet was stopped by a thick, steel brace.

3. Three of the bullets managed to penetrate through the front seat of the automobile still holding their course. Four of the bullets that penetrated the rear seat were stopped by the front seat springs.

4. The three .45 slugs that did punch through the front seat still had enough energy to hammer into the glove compartment with results shown. An amazing display of penetration for standard ball ammo!

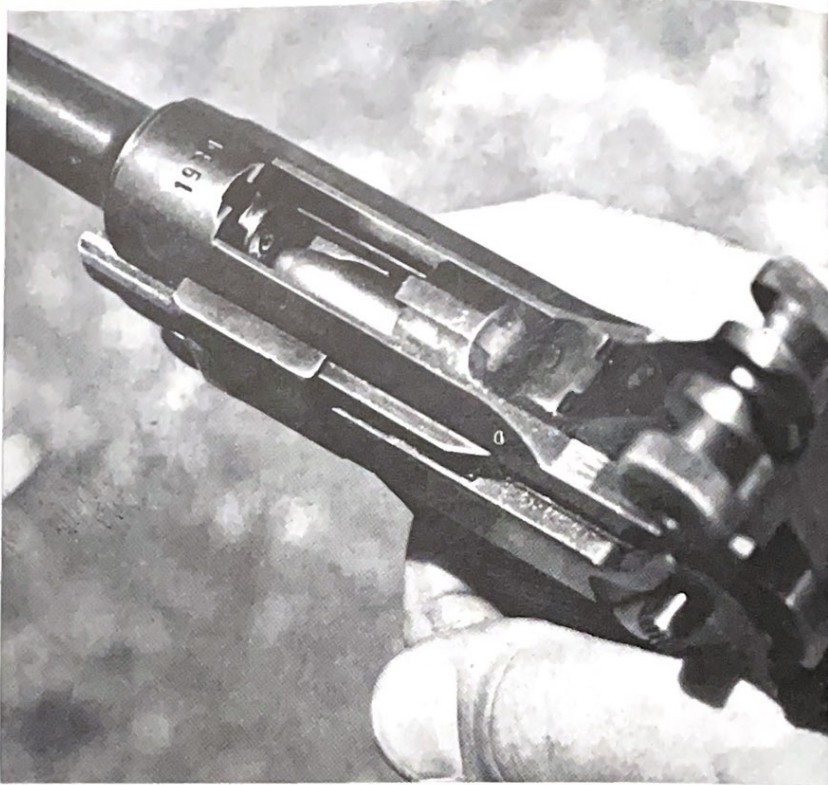
5. Author fires directly through the front of an automobile windshield at a silhouette target placed in the driver's seat to test possible deflection of the bullet in penetrating through safety glass.

6. The .45 Auto bullet easily penetrated and hit intended point of aim as indicated. The 9mm Luger also passed this test with flying colors, although it was a poor second on auto body penetration tests.

.45 AUTO VS. 9MM LUGER

the Colt added power and ruggedness under adverse treatment to the combination. We haven't progressed much since.

I have a slight problem in writing about the 1911 Colt, for a good many of those who do me the honor of reading my compositions seem to think I am a fanatic on the subject. This disturbs me, for this pistol doesn't need fanaticism to support it. Ferrari cars have won Le Mans, the world's longest and most grueling motor race, for five years in a row. You don't need to be a fanatic to be impressed by a Ferrari. Similarly, the Southwest Combat Pistol League conducts the only open, unrestricted, practical pistol competition in the world, and four of the last five annual championships have been won by shooters using the 1911 Colt. The senior annual championship contest is the California Big Bear Competition, shot for \$500 in prize money and open to any weapon of .38 caliber or larger. The top sixteen contestants are screened out to compete man-against-man, and this year 14 of the 16 used the .45 auto. The first seven places were taken with the .45 auto. The man leading on points for 1964 uses the .45 auto. The top five contenders for the Pardee Memorial Trophy use the .45 auto. Eighty-two percent of League competitors now use the .45 auto, as against about five per-



Here is the classic malfunction that most often plagues the Luger. The extractor on occasion will slip over the extractor groove on the cartridge, the bolt will pick up the next cartridge as it returns to battery and the pistol is completely out of action. It was malfunctions of this sort that led to the adoption of the .45 Auto as U.S. sidearm.

Below: Author (right) and G&A staff member run rapid fire tests with the Luger and .45 Auto. Target cans are hidden from view by dust from bullets but heavier impact on dirt from big .45 bullets is apparent. In several hundred rounds fired during the tests, not one malfunction with the .45 Auto was recorded. The Luger "jammed" some 21 times.



cent when combat competition was introduced ten years ago. This is *open* competition, remember; you can use any type of pistol you wish, as long as it is of medium or large caliber. Competition is the test, and the Colt auto wins.

Some may say that the Colt is simply plentiful in the U.S. To this I may answer that it's not as plentiful as the double-action .38 revolver in police circles, and about half of the competitors in combat contests are policemen. Some may say that .45 ACP ammunition is abundant and cheap, but I can answer that it is no more abundant nor any cheaper than .38 Special ammunition. Some may say that contestants always use immaculate and finely tuned weapons in contests and that rugged reliability under abusive conditions is not a factor, but to this I can say that both the original army trials and the Marine Corps trials following WWII established the reliability of the .45 auto as superior to that of any other sidearm tested.

The .45 auto has several drawbacks. It is not as safe in untrained hands as a revolver. It is a bit harder to learn to shoot than a .38 double action since it kicks harder and squirms in an unpracticed grip. It is too big to be held comfortably in a small hand. It will malfunction, as will any auto, if fed the wrong ammunition. Its safety is in-

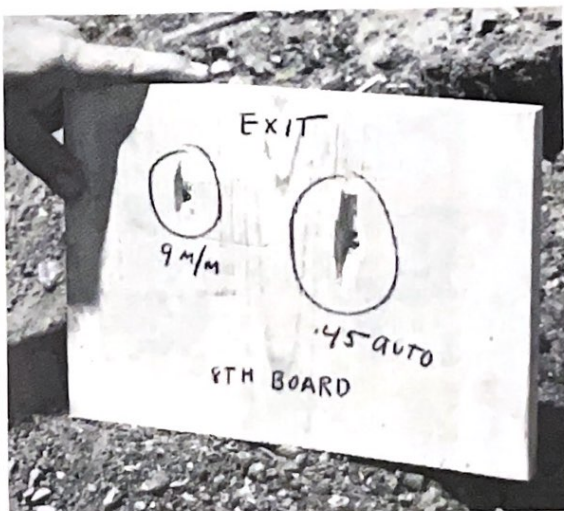
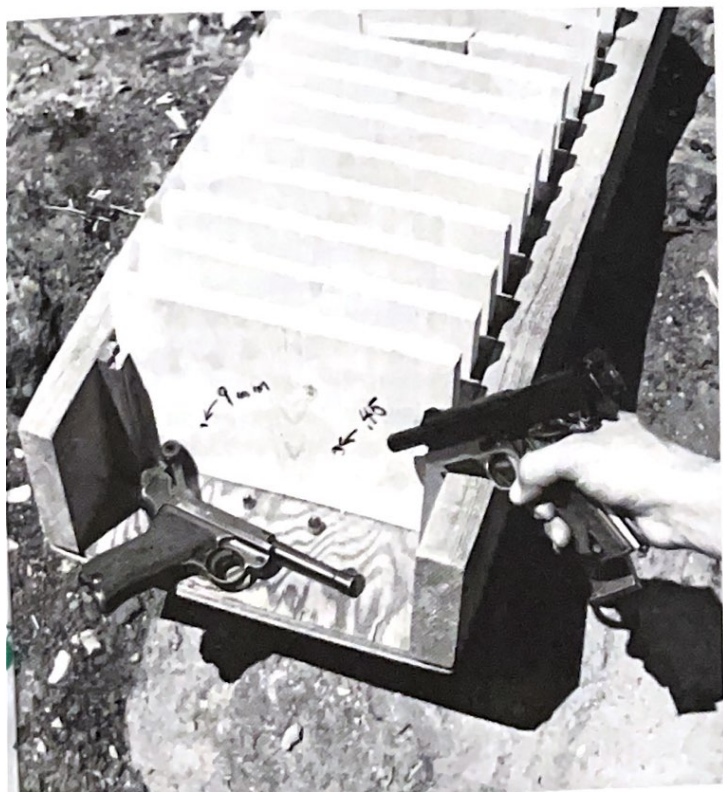
continued on page 73



Further tests of the .45 Auto on the rear window of an automobile produced these spectacular results. The one round struck just above the rear deck lid and instantly shattered the entire window. The bullet exited through the front windshield on course.



With the right bullets, the .45 Auto becomes a potent field gun. This is a lineup of bullets developed by bullet maker Mason Williams and fired into sand, clay and pine boards. Bullets are half-jacketed, soft lead with a shallow cup point — note expansion.



Above: Both the standard 124-gr. 9mm load and the 230-gr. .45 Auto bullet penetrated the eighth board of the baffle. The .45 was stopped by the ninth board but the 9mm bullet penetrated to the tenth. Note the difference in disruption of the exit holes.

Left: Standard penetration test was made on 7/8-in. pine boards spaced one-inch apart. Both guns were fired on the same boards to get a fair comparison.

.45 AUTO VS LUGER

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cessible to a left-handed shooter, which is also true of all other autos. And, still a fault of all autos, its round-nosed, point-jacketed, factory ammunition wastes up to a third of its potential stopping power. However, if you are an experienced pistol shot, right-handed, with a large hand, and have the right ammunition, these are trivial matters.

The higher velocity of the Parabellum cartridge causes it to shoot flatter over longer pistol ranges than the .45, and to show greater penetration in hard materials. The bigger cartridge, naturally, shows much greater stopping power—a little more than double on the Hatcher scale. In muzzle energy they are much the same—345 ft. lbs. for the Parabellum and 369 for the .45. The hot loadings show just about 400 for the Parabellum and 460 to 500 for the .45. However, calculated energy is a deceptive measure of pistol power.

As to accuracy, both cartridges can be counted on to do splendidly in good guns. Match ammunition for the .45 auto will print optimum 10-shot groups of around 1.6 inches at 50 yards. I have heard that European match ammunition for the Parabellum will do the same, but I have no documentary proof to substantiate this.

In short, both the 9mm and the .45 ACP are fine, well-designed, accurate pistol cartridges, but "a good big man will beat a good little man." The penetration edge of the smaller cartridges can be wiped out by using a penetrating bullet in the larger, if penetration is needed; (.45 G.I., 8 boards; 9mm, 9 boards; .45 M.P., 11 boards); and the flatter trajectory of the Parabellum is insignificant on short pistol ranges.

In comparing the pistols themselves, the Luger's strongest point is its neat, handsome, "sexy" appearance. It is a really fine looking weapon, whereas the Colt is only beautiful to the prejudiced eyes of those who know how it performs. The feel of the Luger is very comfortable, with its subtly curved stocks and muzzle lightness, while the Colt feels "boxy" and slab-sided to an untrained hand. The Colt is nearly a third heavier unloaded, and balances exactly under the trigger guard, while the Luger carries its weight aft. The sights of the Luger are normally of the V-and-pyramid variety while those of the Colt are a square front post with a U or a square rear notch.

Issue triggers are usually not very good on either weapon, but that of the Colt is easily corrected, while the Luger trigger action is quite hopeless, working as it does around four corners. Of course some people actually like a spongy trigger and can do good work

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Numrich Arms
WEST HURLEY 6, N.Y.

with one, but I am not one of them.

The manual safety on the Colt can be operated instantly on the draw, permitting split-second action from the holster in trained hands. The Luger safety is next to impossible to use rapidly, though if the holster carries the weapon high and set out a preliminary thumb thrust can work it before the firing grip is taken. A military draw, working the action as the barrel lines up, is harder to bring off with the Luger due to the rising toggle which cramps the loading hand, but it can be learned in time.

I find it impossible to place my hand directly rearward of the piece on the Luger, as the stocks guide my grip around to the right, but this may be a matter of individual configuration. I have no trouble with the Colt grip.

In considering the accuracy of the weapons themselves, I am hampered in that I know what the 1911 will do, but I am not absolutely sure about the Luger. A tight but untuned .45 will average about five-inch groups at 50 yards, which is fine for combat. A customized .45 will do two inches at best at the same range, which is just about the accuracy limit of the ammunition. I have been told of Lugers that will do as well, but I have never seen one. However, the Luger action is theoretically more accurate than that of the Colt, so let's give it the benefit of the doubt and say that, for practical purposes, the two guns are equal.

In the matter of reliability, I know the 1911 will always work if its ammunition is right. As to the Luger, I can only quote General Julian Hatcher, who had more experience on the handguns than any of us. "In general, I have not found the Luger action to be as safe from jams as the Colt action. The main troubles are either failures to open entirely or failures to close entirely. Nearly every jam in the Luger can be traced to a variable quality of ammunition. The most important thing about this gun is to get good, strong, reliable ammunition. If you are sure of the quality of your ammunition, the gun will generally perform well mechanically."

Colonel R. K. Wilson, R.A., in his definitive *Textbook of Automatic Pistols* agrees. To quote:

"Altogether, the Parabellum is well designed, but it has several serious weaknesses. The firing mechanism, with its lateral sear and side plate, admits sand and mud, and is easily put out of action under active service conditions. In addition, it is extremely difficult to adjust, and in any event the long, creeping pull can hardly be improved to any extent. The sights are well designed, and the pistol shoots very accurately, but is rather susceptible to faults in ammunition. Many self-loaders will function reliably with almost any sort

of bad ammunition — the .45 Colt is notable as regards this — but the Parabellum simply will not work unless the ammunition is of first class quality. As a military weapon, it has already been pointed out that it is easily put out of action. In addition, the small calibre — actually only .347 of an inch — also limits its efficiency. It possesses great penetrative but little stopping power."

Another interesting comparison is that of Captain H. W. McBride in his marvelous *A Rifleman Went to War*. McBride was that great rarity, an enthusiastic fighting man. He fought for the Canadians before the U.S. entered WWI and then shipped over in the U.S. Army. He fought as an enlisted man throughout the entire campaign on the western front. He says:

"I had used both the Luger and Mauser pistols before the war, and often during the war I would pick up one and give it a tryout; but, without attempting to enumerate any specific merits or faults of either, they just did not appeal to me. Now, this is not because of any prejudice against the German, because no such feeling exists. A lot of the best friends I have in the world are either German bred or of German extraction and about the greatest pleasures I have enjoyed have been connected with steins of good German beer and the accompanying good-fellowship — the songs and camaraderie of good fellows when they get together.

"No, it was just that, like the Webley, they always appeared to be clumsy — cumbersome. Shoot? Hell yes, they shot all right for the three Ps — Punch, Penetration and Power — they were about in a class by themselves for these, but to go on down the alphabet, when you come to W, just stop and consider the Colt .45 and its Wallop. You better also go back to the beginning of the alphabet and add Accuracy. That old .45 slug has more authority than any of the others, not excepting the 9mm Luger, and as for accuracy, there never was a Luger or Mauser made to even come within hailing distance of our Service Colt."

In all, I should say that the Luger and the .45 Colt Auto are not quite comparable. The Luger is a handsome, fascinating and very effective weapon, but it is obsolete. It is a perfectly satisfactory house gun for a non-shooter, but it will not be found on the belt of a knowledgeable fighting man. If the Luger cartridge is preferred, for any reason, it may be used in a number of excellent modern pistols, especially the Browning P-35, the Smith & Wesson Model 39, and Swiss S.I.C., or the Spanish Star. All of these are better pistols, for shooting, than their predecessor. On the other hand, the 1911A1 Colt is still with us, and its successor has not yet appeared on the horizon. 🐾

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