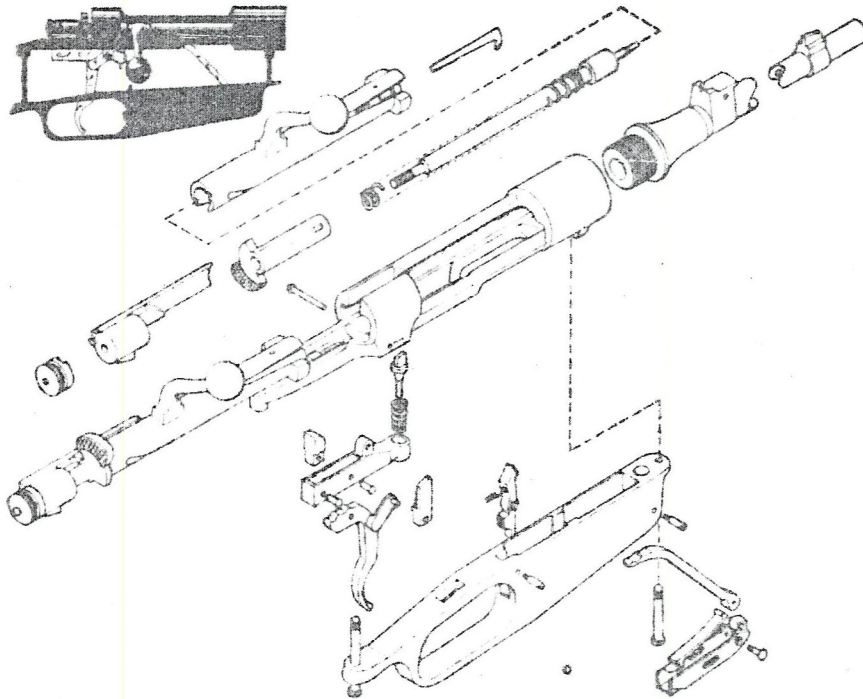




AN INSIDE LOOK

AT THE CARCANO RIFLE

By SHELLEY BRAVERMAN



FAR BETTER than commonly realized is the design and construction of the Italian Carcano. Developed more than seventy-five years ago, it has features that remain unique to this day.

When loaded and cocked, positioning the safety to the "safe" position (rotation to left) not only locks the firing pin, but also relaxes tension on the striker spring—thus allowing the gun to be carried loaded and ready, in safety, without "setting" striker springs.

Also generally overlooked is the fact that the safety itself has a substantial lug that is positioned into a slot in the receiver when in firing position; thus, in addition to the bolt lugs, there are two other safety lugs for strength, the root of the bolt handle and the projection on the safety.

Note that the extractor design is such that the bolt face supports almost all of the cartridge case head and it was designed in 1891!

The Mannlicher type magazine requires a clip that contains six cartridges, but variants are encountered that have an Arisaka (Japanese) Mauser-type magazine. In this connection it should

be noted that the Arisaka was subsequent to the Carcano in adoption by the countries involved, Japan and Italy.

The barrels were designed for gain-twist rifling; starting with one turn in 23 inches and progressing to one turn in 7 1/2 inches in a 31-inch barrel. Cartridges for this gun were so highly developed that the case mouths were counter-bored, leaving an internal ledge for precise bullet seating. This combination consistently won the 300 Meter International Military Match for many years.

To field strip: 1) Set safety to ready; 2) Open bolt and withdraw by pulling rearwardly while pressing trigger. Bolt may be disassembled by unscrewing cocking piece after release by pressing spring-loaded locking plunger; extractor claw may be removed by pushing outward and forward from bolt face.

In 1938 some of the worn 6.5 caliber barrels were rebarreled to 7.35 mm; these were known as the "Model 38" but did not last very long, eventually being rebarreled back to the original 6.5 Carcano cartridge. These latter models are known as the Model 91/38.

present the ultimate in power and recoil. Both kick too much. Both are better fitted to a light carbine and not to a handgun. The .44 has proved highly popular in light, short rifle. The Ruger carbine for this caliber is best seller. The .41, on the other hand is deadlier than the Egyptian chance against the Hebrews. It never got to the ground. Touted as the last answer for the cops of the land the gendarme somehow never got the word. The last sad rites can be sung over this or any day now. It will sink without trace.

At the yon end of the spectrum the deluge of fast traveling twenty-two cartridges has fared little better. There has been the .22 rimfire Magnum, the 22 Rem-Jet, the 221 Fireball, and the .256 Magnum. Of the foursome, the .22 rimfire Magnum is the most on the ball but it, somehow hasn't gotten much farther than its starting gate. The 22 Rem-Jet is sort of freak. It is the 357 case necked down in a long sloping and exceedingly dreary shoulder which sets back against the recoil plate in the six and binds the cylinder so that it turns harder than a wagon wheel without grease. The .221 Fireball is a spitting image reproduction of the 221 Remington. It is fired in the XP-100 pistol. This is a short rifle without the shoulder stock. It weighs 3 1/2 pounds and has to be held in both hands. Thus, an awkward proposition and you need a short, handy-size pack for a pan animal when you go afield with it. The .256 Magnum is the 357 case necked down with a rather abrupt shoulder. This cartridge is identical to the old .25-20 rifle cartridge. The bullet is the same and ballistics are similar. It is capable of excellent ballistics but, like sex after 60, it just doesn't catch on. These days there isn't a pistol for the cartridge. Ruger made one, a single-shot, but one-barrel, one-shot pistols these days are strictly for grandpa. The gun has been dropped from the line and I look to see the .256 cartridge follow it very shortly.

Where then are we going to see activity in the handgun field? Why in the middle calibers, I would say. There are a lot of possibilities in those diameters from 30 to 36, that is from 7.62 mm to 9 mm. God knows it's time some attention was paid to the potential here. John Browning developed the .38 ACP in 1890, the 380 in 1908, and the 32 ACP in 1901. The .38 ACP usually referred to as the Model 1911, actually was invented by the immortal Mauser in 1905. Thus, for old cartridges, it would be retrograde to see something new.

There are some excellent caliber