

October 14, 1968

Mr. Dick Bernabei  
Department of Classics  
Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario

Dear Mr. Bernabei:

Many thanks for your letter of September 26. My reply is delayed owing to press of work.

It is easy to answer your question about the line of sight and line of fire. My authentic scope was mounted for me by Mr. Martin Retting, the importer, who sold them to Klein's, and thus Mr. Oswald. The line of sight (center of the scope) is 4 centimeters above the line of fire (center of the bore) and it is also one centimeter to the left to allow for insertion of the clip.

I have previously written to most of the addresses you sent and they usually do not answer. When I see a 6.5 mm Carcano advertised I usually buy it and in my letter specifically request model 91/38 and if this is not the gun in question then to return the money. So far all such guns on arrival were not the requested model 91/38 with the result that I have to pay postage both ways and write many letters and sometimes enlist the help of postal inspectors to get the refund.

Am returning your clippings and on one the gun appears to be model 91/24 and the other 91/TS. Guns simply designated as Carcano and/or Terni usually turn out to be pre-World War I. I am told that during peace time all Italian army rifles were made at Terni which was the official armory. During the second war the guns were also made by Breda in Brescia, by Beretta in Gardone, Ravizza in Milano, and others. All of these factories turned out a few 91/38 models. A characteristic feature of the 91/38 gun is the long heavy barrel bored from blanks intended for the suddenly discontinued 7.5 mm calibre. The 91/38 has fittings for the folding bayonet which is now readily available (Mr. Oswald did not have the bayonet, it is said) and has the cleaning rod in the butt-stock. The sling swivels mount from the side and not bottom. Enclosed is photograph of my model 91/38. Mr. Oswald ordered a 91/24 from Kline's advertisement but they erred and sent the 91/38.

Mr. Dick Bernabei  
Kingston, Ontario

The 6.5 mm ammunition you have indicated almost certainly is Italian military surplus, even pre-WWII. I have purchased several lots and find that it fires about half of the time. The only worthwhile ammunition commercially available is Norma currently being made in Sweden with a 156 grain soft nose bullet. Western Cartridge Company (Winchester) made four batches of such military ammunition during the last year of the last World War and all were exported. Anything in America has been re-imported. I have been able to obtain batches of 6001, 6002, and 6003, but not the fourth lot, so far. Xeroxed overleaf is a box of authentic ammunition. Mr. Oswald's lot is unknown.

I agree that the make or model of the gun for your test is not of great importance. The important thing is to have it propel a 161 grain 6.5 mm bullet at the same velocity as Mr. Oswald's gun did. However the hair-splitters would insist that this be done with Mr. Oswald's gun C-2766!!! It is important that the bullet be going true and not tumbling throughout all of the trajectory as revealed by hitting some soft wood boards at the appropriate distances.

The only way I know to obtain a 91/38 is to attend the "Gun Shows" from time to time and they can sometimes be had for \$15.00 to \$25.00. Presume you know CBS paid \$150.00 for the gun used in their re-enactment and it did not have an authentic sight.

All the best to you.

Sincerely,

John Nichols

JN:mc  
cc: Mr. Harold Weisberg

P.S. The Italian group, two Colonels and two Generals, at the War college here in Leavenworth have considered my problem of getting a weapon in good condition but it is still considered in Italy as a "war weapon" and cannot be sold. They decided the Italian Government could give one such gun to the U.S. Government but the U.S. military authorities can only loan the gun to me for a short while.