

# 8 Underground

**Crudely made  
outlaw guns of  
vague SMG design—  
similar weapons  
can be found in the  
hands of criminals  
the world over!**

**By Ronaldo Olive**

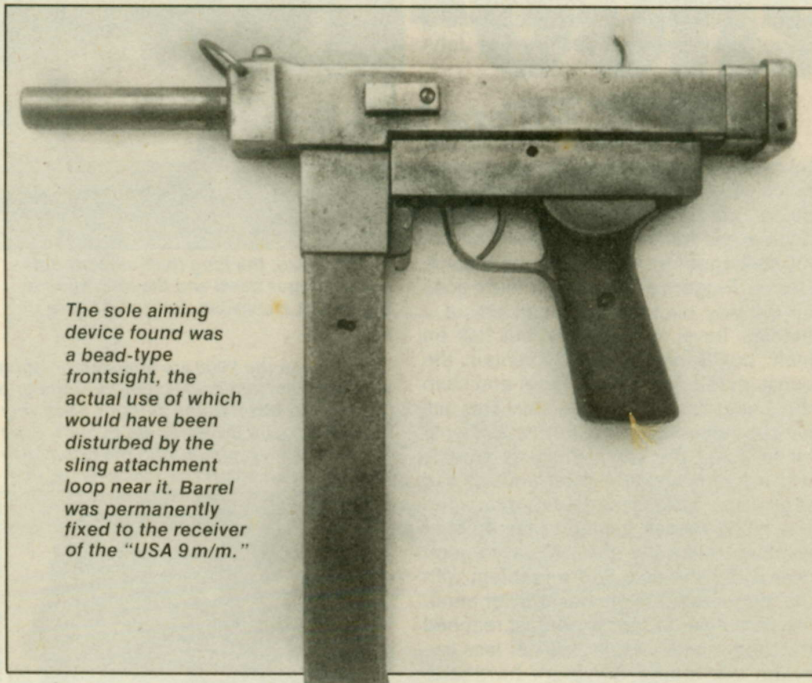
**A**nyone with the slightest interest in guns is sure to know one basic fact: firearms have been produced worldwide in a fantastic multitude of types, forms, calibers and brand names. Those who for one reason or another (by profession, hobby, or whatever) become more closely related to them will soon be aware of another equally important point: that very same variety very often defies immediate recognition when coming upon pictures or actual examples of weaponry.

No matter if you're only talking about recent guns of, say, the last fifty years, the problem remains. It just so happens that there have been too many firms in too many countries around the globe putting out a seemingly endless stream of products. Careful and painstaking research will usually result in positive identification of the piece, give or take one or another.

If this is the case with officially-produced guns, it's easy to imagine the difficulties involved as far as clandestinely-made ones are concerned. This group, of course, generally involves weapons intended for criminal activities, guerrilla fighting and the such, but also encompasses those that have come out of the minds and hands of hobbyists, enthusiasts or mechanics geniuses who apparently haven't taken the time to do the paperwork and face red tape to get official approval (if, at all, obtainable) for their brainchildren.

The result is that those "unofficial" guns are bound to eventually come to the hands of authorities. Independently of the country concerned, this has always happened on a regular basis, and I feel that bringing them to public eye is a way of both helping law-enforcement agencies gather reference material for eventual use (you never know where or when similar pieces may show up) and preserving the historical records of firearms, as a whole.

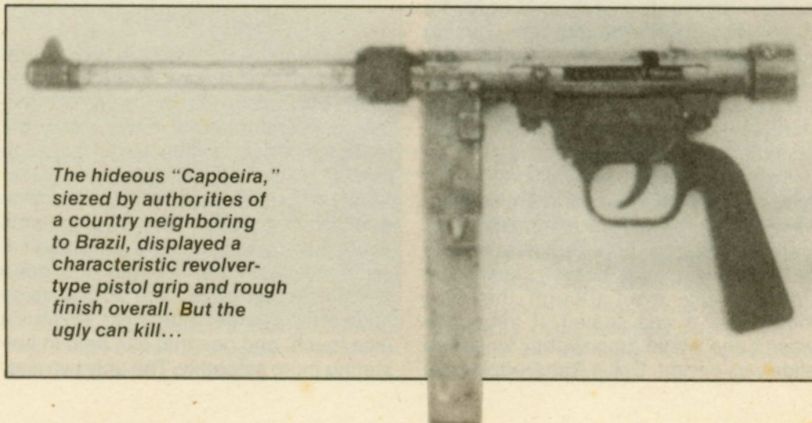
The weaponry included in this group



*The sole aiming device found was a bead-type front sight, the actual use of which would have been disturbed by the sling attachment loop near it. Barrel was permanently fixed to the receiver of the "USA 9 m/m."*

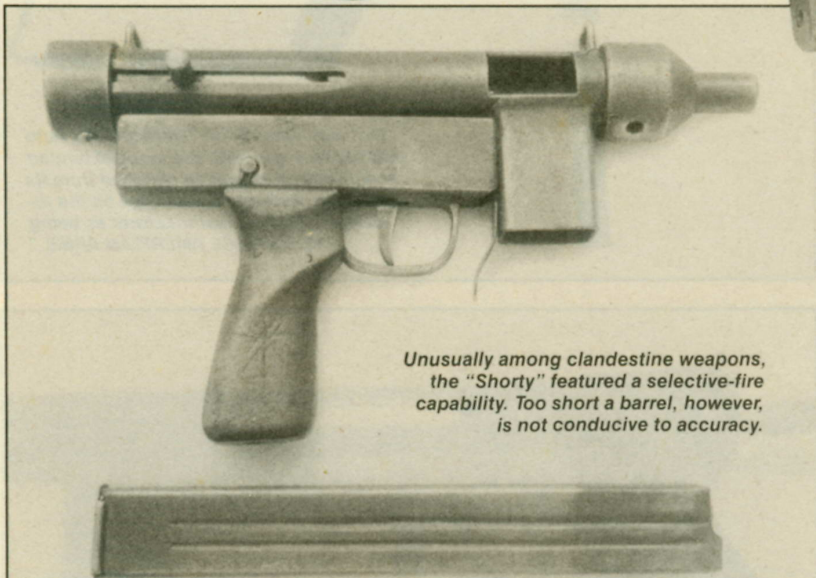


*The "USA 9 m/m" apparently fell into the hands of Brazilian police before completion, since some parts (rear cap screws, fire selector lever) were missing. Position and shape of the cocking handle are noteworthy.*

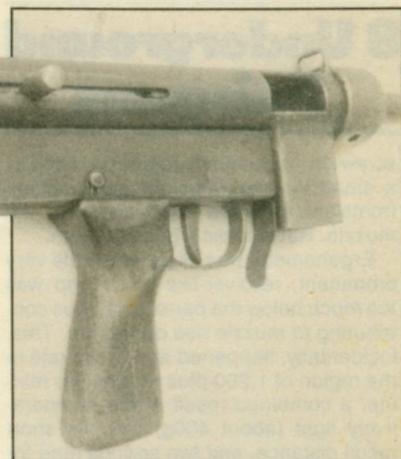


*The hideous "Capoeira," siezed by authorities of a country neighboring to Brazil, displayed a characteristic revolver-type pistol grip and rough finish overall. But the ugly can kill...*

# Subguns

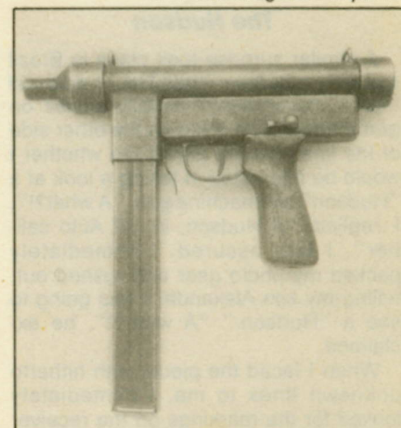


Unusually among clandestine weapons, the "Shorty" featured a selective-fire capability. Too short a barrel, however, is not conducive to accuracy.



The "Shorty" was generally well finished, and is seen here without magazine and with the bolt at the cocked position, the one-piece wooden pistol grip being evident. The loops on top of the receiver might double as sling attachment points or coarse sights.

The reduced overall length of this subgun makes it appear particularly "tall" with the 30-round magazine in place.



range from the so-called zip (or pen) guns and very rudimentary shotguns and shot-shell projectors to more elaborate automatics. Due to their comparative mechanical simplicity, submachine guns happen to be in a leading position as far as more sophisticated "underground" armament is concerned.

The following is a brief account of some (out of a large variety of) clandestine SMGs that have been seized by Brazilian police and to which I have had access. Their origin was, in most cases, believed to be local, but you can never be too sure. After all, people seem to have an enormous facility in moving things of all sorts across borders.

## The "Capoeira"

To emphasize my point, I'll start... outside Brazil, in a neighboring South American country. During a professional visit to a certain military organization, one of

those informal lunch talks at the officers' mess had one of the local participants ask me: "Do you know the Capoeira, from São Paulo?"

I sure did, as "capoeira" is the name of a very popular Brazilian martial art (a mix of fighting, dancing, and acrobatics, done under the sound of drums and a metal-string bow hit by a small stick) whose origins date back to the time of slavery in Brazil. I elaborated further, politely correcting the clearly puzzled guy sitting across the table by adding that "capoeira" is not exactly from São Paulo, but mainly from the state of Bahia, in the sunny Brazilian northeast.

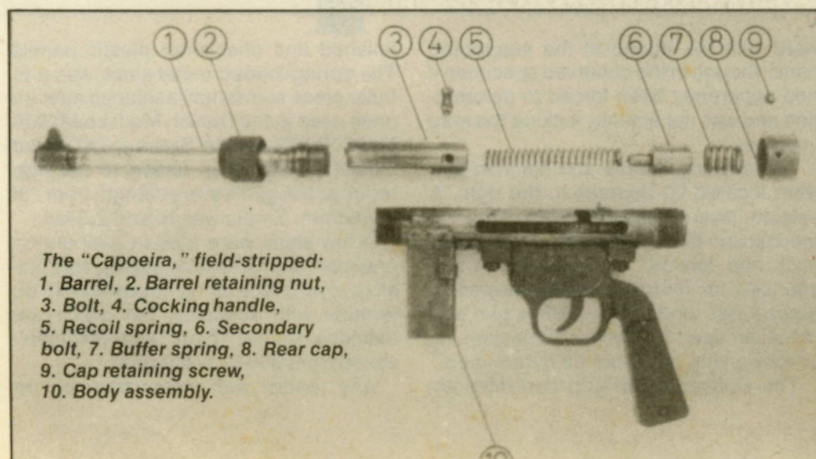
His puzzlement immediately brought perplexity to my face as he explained that he was talking about the "Capoeira"... submachine gun! No, I didn't know any Brazilian buzzgun by that name. But the fact was that a weapon so marked (CAPOEIRA—SAO PAULO) on its re-

ceiver had come up in his country and apprehended by police, which prompted me to ask for permission to take a look at it.

It turned out to be an ugly, crudely-finished 9x19mm SMG fed by a 30-round box magazine. This, incidentally, was somewhat better finished than the gun itself, maybe having come almost straight from an MP40 or Sten. A broken component at the rear end of the receiver appeared to be a link for a stock of some kind, which in the event was missing.

Operation was conventional blowback, with full-auto only mode available. The sole safety was a cutout on the left side of the cylindrical receiver into which the cocking handle could be locked in the rearward (ready-to-fire) position.

The 235mm long barrel was roughly rifled (six grooves, left hand twist, about 1:405mm pitch), and attached to the receiver by means of a mounting nut which screwed onto it. The rear cap was also a



The "Capoeira," field-stripped:  
1. Barrel, 2. Barrel retaining nut,  
3. Bolt, 4. Cocking handle,  
5. Recoil spring, 6. Secondary  
bolt, 7. Buffer spring, 8. Rear cap,  
9. Cap retaining screw,  
10. Body assembly.

## 8 Underground Subguns

screw-on job, and aiming was provided by a small V-notch rearsight and a blade front sight mounted pretty close to the muzzle. Radius was a good 330mm.

Ergonomics was lousy, since the very prominent, revolver-like pistol grip was too much below the barrel axis, thus contributing to muzzle rise during fire. This, incidentally, happened at a cyclic rate in the region of 1,200-plus rounds per minute, a combined result of the comparatively light (about 400g) bolt, its short recoil distance, and two springs (one for recoil, another for buffering).

In all, 80 shots were fired from the "Ca-poeira," which started presenting feed and/or percussion problems after 65 rounds. This was attributed to the weak, poorly-designed recoil spring. Since working in itself was precarious, accuracy was not seriously examined, but poor ergonomics plus very high rate of fire usually equals...shame!

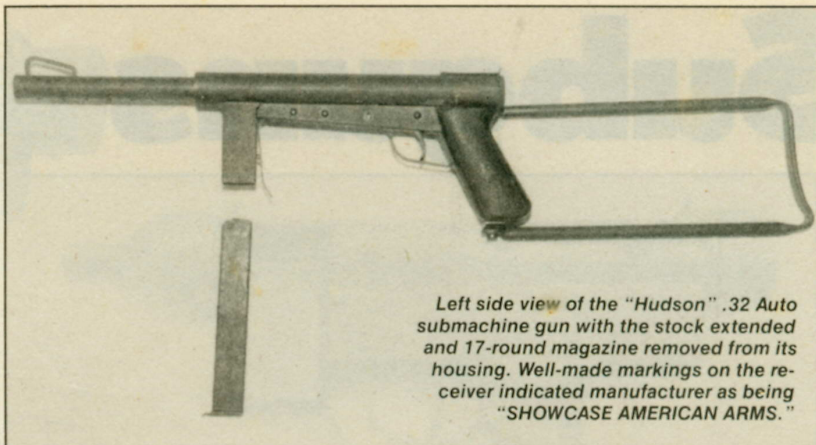
### The Hudson

A similar surprise took place in Brazil some months later, when I received a call from a department I usually advise on gun matters. The voice on the other side of the line casually asked me whether I would be interested in taking a look at a "Hudson" submachine gun. "A what?!", I replied. "A Hudson, in .32 Auto caliber", I was assured. I immediately packed my photo gear and rushed out, telling my son Alexander I was going to see a "Hudson." "A what?!", he exclaimed.

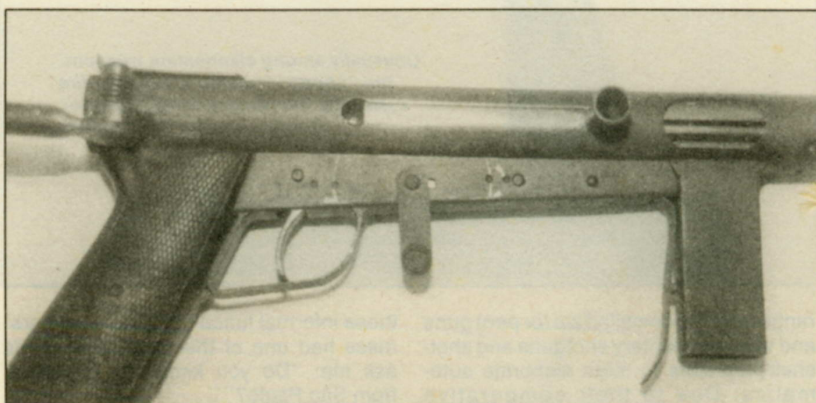
When I faced the piece, with hitherto unknown lines to me, I immediately looked for the markings on the receiver top. They were very neatly made, and read "HUDSON ESPECIAL CAL. 32 AUTO, SHOWCASE AMERICAN ARMS, MADE IN USA," and as expected, no serial number was found nor an indication of where the "factory" was located. The mentioned caliber, also known as the 7.65mm Browning, is not exactly common for subguns, but has nevertheless been used in some (mainly, older European models). The magazine stacked the 17 rounds in a single row.

The weapon had clean, simple lines. The relatively narrow (30mm diameter) cylindrical receiver continued into a smaller-diameter, perforated jacket for the 175mm long barrel (six grooves, RH twist). On top of this was a skeletonized ramp front sight, while the rearsight was a fixed V notch, radius being 425mm.

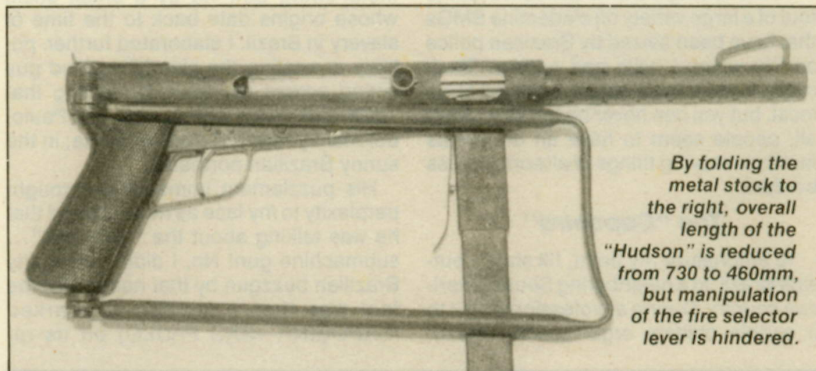
The firing mechanism fit into a stamped housing which became shallower towards the forward-located magazine well. The mag release catch was a long blade which was to be pushed rear-



Left side view of the "Hudson" .32 Auto submachine gun with the stock extended and 17-round magazine removed from its housing. Well-made markings on the receiver indicated manufacturer as being "SHOWCASE AMERICAN ARMS."



This close-up view of the "Hudson" shows the fire-selector lever midway between the forward and rear settings, but since it was inoperative, author couldn't determine which was "Fire" and "Safety." Also clear are the spring-loaded stock hinges, blade-type magazine catch and checkered plastic panels of pistol grip.



By folding the metal stock to the right, overall length of the "Hudson" is reduced from 730 to 460mm, but manipulation of the fire selector lever is hindered.

ward with the thumb of the supporting hand, though in the observed specimen it had apparently been forced to deformation and was not actually locking the mag in place.

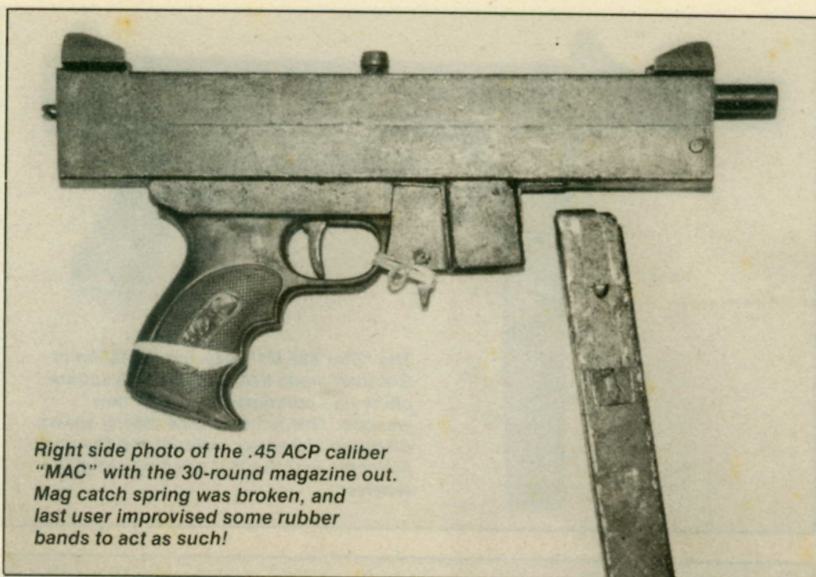
The cocking handle and ejection port were located 90 degrees to the right. A selector lever on the right side of the fire mechanism housing flipped 180 degrees back and forward, and apparently was intended for firing and safety purposes. Since it was inoperative and the gun was not taken apart for deeper inspection, its exact working could not be determined.

The inclined pistol grip had decently

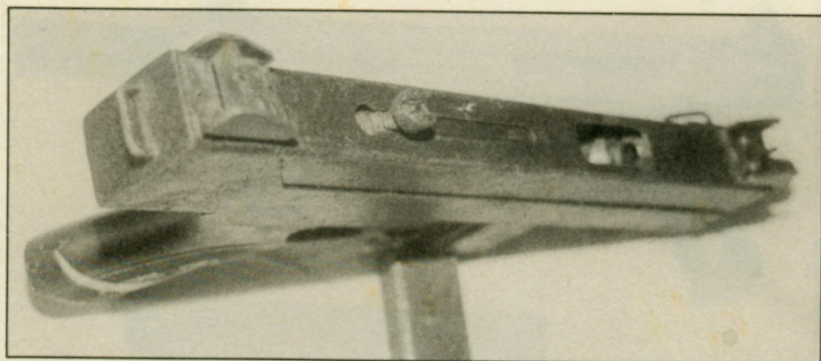
finished and checkered plastic panels. The spring-loaded metal stock was a tubular piece somewhat fashioned after the ones used in the Danish Madsen M1946/M1950/M.53 and the Swedish "K" ("Carl Gustaf"), and when folded to the right reduced the gun's overall length from 730 to 460mm. Empty weight and 2.24kg.

A few shots were tried in a laboratory environment. Only full-auto fire was possible, cyclic rate being impossible to determine with accuracy, but which was definitely on the "high" side (estimates varied from 800 to 1,200 rpm).

Any reader with information on the



Right side photo of the .45 ACP caliber "MAC" with the 30-round magazine out. Mag catch spring was broken, and last user improvised some rubber bands to act as such!



This top view reveals the location and size of the ejection port, cocking piece and protected sights of the "Ingram."

"Hudson" is kindly requested to drop me a line (c/o Harris Publications), for which I thank in advance.

### The "MAC"

I'm calling this particular subgun the "MAC" just because the first time it was referred to by the voice on the phone calling me to take a look at the piece said it was "an Ingram-type submachine gun." Well, the rectangular receiver did bear a general resemblance to Gordon Ingram's MAC family, including the way the top and bottom halves join and the topside location of the cocking knob, with the U-shaped longitudinal cut to allow the use of the sights (protected notch and post, radius of 300mm) prior to firing.

Similarities stopped here. Ejection was upwards, the 175mm-long barrel was higher in the receiver, and the grip/magazine arrangement was different. Although the subgun was, in all, roughly finished, the two-piece plastic pistol grip with pronounced finger grooves definitely possessed an industrialized look. What could have been a name in the center of the checkering was obviously and purposely "erased" by a heated tool of some kind.

The magazine housing, with a small press-forward catch at the rear, was slightly ahead of the trigger guard and presented a slight rake. It was interesting to note that although "black" subguns appear to generally use simpler (but less reliable) single-position feed box magazines, the .45 ACP caliber "MAC" had a two-position job, with wall reinforcement along its upper third portion and capacity for 30 rounds.

Other than sling loops at the rear end and the forward left side of the receiver, there was no indication that any kind of stock or additional support was envisaged. A small lever on the left side, just above the pistol grip, provided safe and fire (auto, only) options. Length overall was 352mm, and empty weight was 2.28kg.

### The "STAR"

You can betcha the folks at Star Bonifacio Echeverria S.A., in Eibar, Spain, had nothing whatsoever to do with the .45 ACP caliber "STAR Z85 M1" (as crudely marked) buzzgun that has also emerged in Brazil. In fact, its farthest ancestry may be located much farthest northeast, in cold Denmark!

To make a long story short, Brazil in the 50s series produced the .45 caliber INA M.B.50/M953 submachine gun, a local, slightly-modified version of the Danish Madsen M1946, and widely employed by Brazilian armed and police forces. Examination of the "Z85" indicated that someone had somehow obtained the basic components of an INA and used them to make a "new" gun. And it seems that this particular fellow didn't want to ever field-strip his creation, as the whole receiver was entirely covered with a thick epoxy finish which prevented its opening in any way other than partial breaking!

My educated guess as to the possible origin of the SMG's inner "organs" was based not only on the relative position of the magazine housing, but also on the bolt and recoil spring design. But the basic clue was a small opening in the rear end of the receiver, through which the return spring guide rod protruded (5mm, cocked; 25mm, full recoil). That's a Madsen/INA feature.

What appear in the photos to be sight protection hoods are just...hoods! The sights themselves were missing or maybe never existed, the whole thing being intended for coarse aiming, only. Unlike the original subgun, of which the firing mechanism was entirely put up within the receiver, the "Z85" featured a rectangular housing for it under the body. The rounded pistol grip was made from a synthetic material (plastic or epoxy), and the forward end of the magazine housing was epoxy-shaped with finger grooves. The magazine catch was at the rear of it.

In addition to a large disrupting crack on the receiver's right side, just ahead of the ejection port, the left side of the "Z85" also displayed substantial structural damage. Not only was much of the epoxy material missing, but the receiver itself had a long longitudinal opening (much like the other side's cocking handle slot) showing, for which there was no apparent reason.

The 111mm long barrel featured a 30mm-diameter jacket with eighteen 10mm perforations around it. The stockless subgun measured 446mm in length and weighed 2.94kg empty.

### STEN Simplicity

The next example of underground SMG found in Brazil recently was a case of low cost and mechanical simplicity, something the British pioneered (at least, in terms of mass production) with their STEN of World War II fame. The gun examined displayed no markings of any kind, nor did it feature any fire selector or applied safety. Caliber was 9mm Parabellum (9x19mm NATO).

A full-auto only, blowback-operated subgun, it had a cylindrical receiver for an equally-shaped bolt, the recoil spring being a wide diameter job pretty much like the one used in the STEN and in the sub-

## 8 Underground Subguns

sequent Patchett/Sterling. The cocking handle lay right on top of the gun, and would definitely interfere with the sights ...had the gun such things! Where one would find them, there were what appeared to be sling loops, 260mm from each other, which means that the buzzgun's requirements apparently did not include aimed shooting.

The thin-walled, 135mm-long barrel was slightly fluted towards the muzzle, just before which it widened again. I wouldn't bet that particular barrel would be able to resist consecutive bursts without overheating. For some reason, the designer/builder reinforced the receiver area adjacent to the magazine housing and the ejection port with an extra layer of steel sheet, roughly soldered on.

The pistol grip was simplicity taken to an extreme, consisting merely of a metal skeletonized structure which was reminiscent of a nearly similar type used in some stockless Mk.II STENs dropped into Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War.

### The "Shorty"

This compact subgun, which discreetly displayed a tiny "9mm" marking on the left side of the firing mechanism housing, embodied a variety of traits which were discrepant, to say the least. Although (like all others) lacking any actual external finish in the form of bluing, painting or whatever, the bare metal was basically well polished, soldering was smoothed, and not many filing/machining marks were present. Fitting overall was decent, and bolt and trigger actions, tried manually only, were gentle.

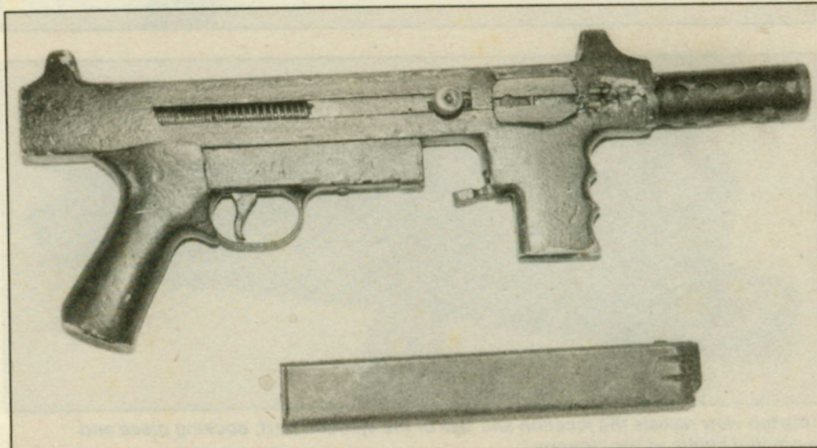
However, it appears that compactness was a primary design requirement, and the guy in charge took the quickest (and loudest!) way to achieve that: the barrel was made short, too short for comfort and expected accuracy. Length, including the chamber, was only 67mm (that's just over 2.5 inches, folks!), which makes me wonder about hitting probability at ranges over arm's length.

Also in the accuracy department, the absence of sights didn't contribute in any way to remedy the situation. In fact, the mini SMG had the very same type of sling loops ("radius" was 185mm) found on the previously described weapon, which would hint a common ancestry. This suspicion was made stronger as examination also revealed similarities between the barrel mounting nuts, receiver rear caps, and cocking pieces, although the bolt had a different design, with a reduced diameter recoil spring and guide rod.

Unlike the vast majority of clandestine



The "Star Z85 M1" was an adaptation of Brazilian-made INA M.B.50/M953 submachine gun components into a "new" weapon. This left side view clearly shows disruption of epoxy material and the unexplainable longitudinal opening along the receiver.



The "Star" with the 30-round and well-finished magazine removed. Unlike the Brazilian INA, its firing mechanism was in a housing additional to the receiver, and a careful observation of the photo will show that the barrel is slightly off-axis.

subguns, selective-fire capability was present. The change lever was located on the left side, just above the well-contoured solid wooden grip, but the setting markings were most unusual. The forward position, indicated by an "F" and three dots (...) would be expected to mean "FULL-AUTO" for English-speaking people, but since this was certainly a "Made in Brazil" product, apparently stood for "FOGO" (Fire), as it corresponded to semi-auto. The top "R" (frequently meaning REPETITION, or semi-auto, in English) registered the full-auto mode, as the corresponding Portuguese word for "burst" is "RAJADA." The safety setting was to the rear, which blocked the bolt either in the forward or the rear position, and although the Portuguese equivalent ("SEGURANCA") would also ask for an "S", a "T" (probably for "TRANCADA", or "locked") was used.

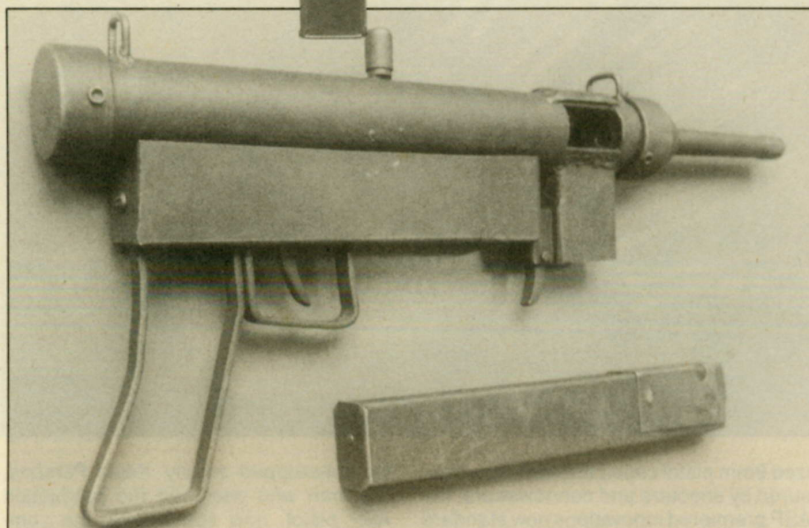
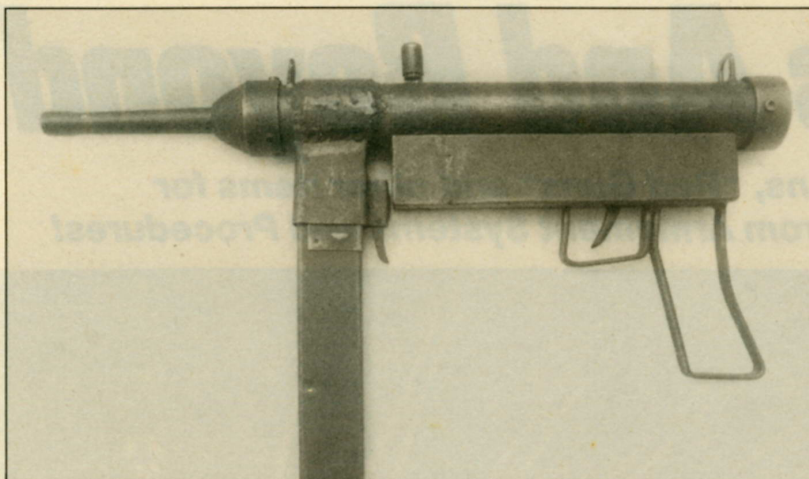
What, however, was particularly significant in the UFO (Unidentified Firing Object) at hand was the information I received from the specific agency which

confiscated it: "several" (the person couldn't—or wouldn't—be specific) similar specimens had already emerged in that region, which could well indicate that the design had already attained "production" status.

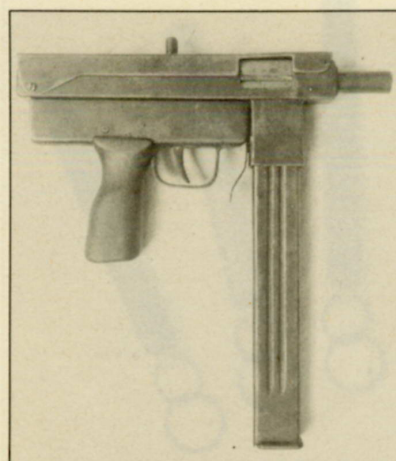
### The "Shorty II"

I'm calling this the second "Shorty" not because it was necessarily made after the one I've just described, but simply as a result of it becoming available for examination about a month later. And the same nickname was given not only for it being a compact job as well, but also because I found a number of points which suggest a common origin for the two subguns. More specifically, in the lower receiver assembly.

Both gun's rectangular firing mechanism housings have virtually equivalent dimensions, the pretty similar wooden pistol grips are in the same relative positions, this also happening with the location of the fire selector shafts and the triggers. The mag housings are comparably shaped and sited, while the very thin,



In this view of the "STEN," the awkward position of the cocking handle, right between the "sights" (or sling loops), comes to attention. Simple, skeletonized pistol grip reminds one of a similar model employed in some stockless Mk.IIs dropped to partisans in Europe during WWII.



Lower receiver of "Shorty II" is a clear indication that it shares a common parentage with the earlier examined model. Rectangular top assembly, however, is entirely different from the other's cylindrical one.

blade-type catches are carbon copies of each other. Other than that, the 30-round single-position feed magazines appear (I couldn't actually test that) interchangeable, displaying comparable crudely-machined grooves on the side walls.

However, the "Shorty II's" receiver itself was an entirely different affair. Rectangular in shape and with a top cover, it featured an ejection window on the right side, a fixed-to-the-bolt cocking handle running along a slot on top, and no sights of any kind. Two ordinary screws at the rear end maintained the top in place, with two studs at the forward end providing additional support.

The barrel was only 70mm long, giving the weapon an overall length of mere 270mm, as compared with a maximum height of 285mm. Those compromisingly short barrels appear to have been used as if someone had obtained a regular 9mm Parabellum barrel and then chopped it into multiple shorter ones for

No material other than metal was employed in the subgun whose design philosophy was broadly based on that of the British STEN. Reinforcement around the receiver, by the magazine housing/ejection port area, is evident.

use in several different guns.

Oh, yes. The fire selector had the very same settings, and the respective markings were equally weird. Semi-auto (forward) was indicated by a most unusual "T", maybe for the Portuguese word "Tiro" (Shooting); full-auto (upward) was "R" ("Rajada," or Burst); and safety (rearward) had an all-intriguing "F." I wonder if it was intended to mean something like "Fechada" (Closed) or a dirtier alternative, which in Brazil also begins with the letter F.

### The Angular "USA 9mm"

I would be really surprised if the angular beast I had in my hands had been built Stateside. But the crude markings found on it apparently were intended to make the naive think so, and the very old-fashioned indeed abbreviation of millimeter ("m/m") in the caliber might be an indication of the advanced age of the one who either made or marked that SMG.

The receiver was a rectangular boxlike structure 25 x 25mm on the sides, with a similarly-shaped firing mechanism housing below and a separate magazine housing ahead. The 114mm long barrel was permanently attached to the gun, whose sole aiming device was a huge bead-type front sight...located right in the middle of the only (sling?) swivel found on the weapon!

The cocking handle came from the right side of the bolt through a slot in the receiver, and bent upwards to form a sort of hook. The return spring was a small-diameter one with a guide rod. The relatively small magazine catch was pulled rearward to let it come out.

For an unknown reason, the bolt was stuck at its rearmost position, so not much could be found about the gun's operation. It seemed, however, that it was a selective-fire proposition, and that an orifice existing midway between the pistol grip (metal with wooden panels) and the trigger was to have been used for a fire-selector lever. Barely visible markings on the right side only had the earlier mentioned "T" (back) and an "R" (front) followed by an enigmatic "\*/", with nothing on the top position.

The rectangular component that appears in the photos screwed on the left side of the receiver is, surprisingly, an L-shaped piece that enters an opening in the wall to form the ejector. A very unorthodox mechanical expedient, indeed.

Overall length was 325mm, and weight was 2.27 kg. From the general appearance of the weapon, my guess is that it was actually an unfinished specimen, caught by the hands of the Law before it could ever be used to break it.