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DOPE BAG continued

Army Sniper Rifle

There have been reports of considerable sniper activity in the Vietnam war. Has our Army a modern sniping rifle for this function?

Answer: The U.S. Army Weapons Command announced the 7.62 mm. sniping rifle XM21 on Sept. 18, 1969. It consists of the M14 National Match rifle with an adjustable range telescope (ART) mounted. (The X in such a designation identifies an item still under development or test. If the item is adopted, the X is dropped leaving the final M number.)

Initial development of this new rifle was described in "Army Lab Adds ART to Sniping", THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN, May 1969, p. 47. The development was done by the U.S. Army Limited War Laboratory, using M14 service rifles match-conditioned by the U.S. Army Marksmanship Training Unit at Ft. Benning.

The ART combines the range-finding capability of the Redfield 3X-9X variable power "Accu-Range" telescope with an exterior cam which puts on the correct elevation for any range from 300 to 900 meters. The Redfield scope now used has an improved power adjustment lock. (The Leatherwood Auto/Range scope sight, manufactured on this exterior elevation cam principle for commercial sale, was described in THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN, Sept. 1968, p. 67-74.)

The present XM21 is assembled with M14 National Match rifles which have been rebuilt in Rock Island Arsenal for the purpose. M14 National Match rifles were originally manufactured with special attention to those points which are important for accurate shooting, and the Rock Island rebuild takes advantage of latest information acquired on the subject. Attachment of the scope base to the rifle is simplified by a lug with large threaded hole, and a vertical and a longitudinal groove, which were regularly machined into M14 rifle receivers during manufacture in anticipation of a scope requirement.

The assembled XM21 rifle is of moderate weight, the weight with loaded 20-round magazine being given as 11 lbs. It is intended for use primarily with 7.62 mm. NATO M118 Match ammunition, identical in type with 7.62 mm. National Match ammunition, and the elevation cam is made for this ammunition. The rifle acceptance specifications require that average extreme spread for three consecutive ten-shot groups with this ammunition may not exceed six inches at a range of 300 meters.

The National Matches and other training and competition events open to American civilian riflemen have yielded many benefits to national defense. This new XM21 rifle, based directly on the M14 National Match rifle and the M118 Match ammunition developed in large part for National Match use, is a striking example of this.—E.H.H.

Suhl Sporting Arms

Are double-barrel shotguns and rifles still being produced in Suhl, Germany? I haven't seen a Suhl-made gun in several years.

Answer: Double-barrel shotguns and rifles of both side-by-side and over-under types as well as combination rifle-shotguns are still being produced in Suhl, East Germany. Of conventional top-break design, these guns are offered in 12-, 16-, and 20-ga., and many different rifle calibers.

One of the more prominent Suhl sporting arms producers is the VEB Ernst-Thaelmann-Werk. Named after Ernst Thaelmann, a famous German Communist, this firm turns out Fortuna guns in the former J. P. Sauer & Sohn plant, and also the well-known Merkel guns. VEB in the firm's name stands for Volks-Eigene Betrieb (People's-Owned Enterprise).

Another prominent Suhl sporting arms manufacturer is the VEB Fahrzeug-und-Geraetewerk Simson (Simson Vehicle and Equipment Works). Simson has been in the small arms business since the 1890's, and formerly produced Mauser 98 rifles and Luger pistols for the German Army.

Most unusual of the Suhl arms makers is BUHAG (Buechsenmacher-Handwerksgenossenschaft m. B.H.), a gunmaker's association or guild consisting of 48 small firms. This association is similar to the one in Ferlach, Austria. BUHAG guns, like other sporting arms currently produced in Suhl, are marketed by an East German government trade organization.

Immanuel Meffert and A. W. Wolf are fairly old Suhl arms firms, but they are small compared with the Ernst-Thaelmann-Werk and Simson. Meffert guns are currently sold under the trade name "Hubertus".

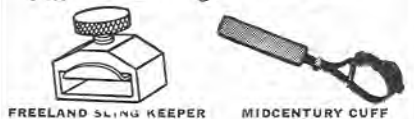
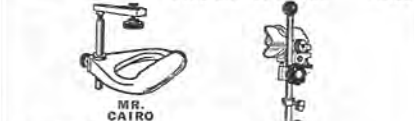
While sporting arms currently produced in Suhl are generally of high quality, they are not often encountered in the U.S. due to the high import tariff on goods made behind the Iron Curtain.

Several well-known arms firms such as Krieghoff, J. P. Sauer & Sohn, and F. W. Heym, fled Suhl shortly after World War II and established new factories in West Germany.—L.O.

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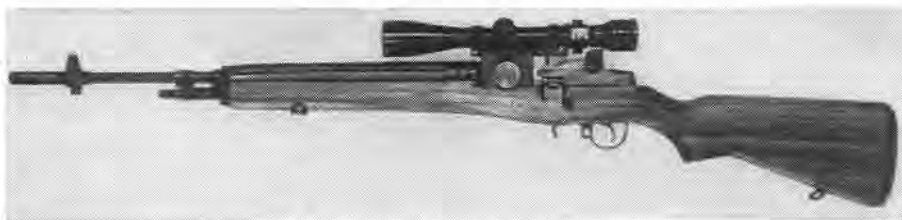
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