

COMBAT HANDGUNS

PERFORMANCE TEST:
.38 SPECIAL MAGNUM
VS. THE .357

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Cover Story

EXCLUSIVE TEST REPORT

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HANDGUNNING'S
FIRST 10-MM.**

Jeff Cooper Tests the Bren-10.

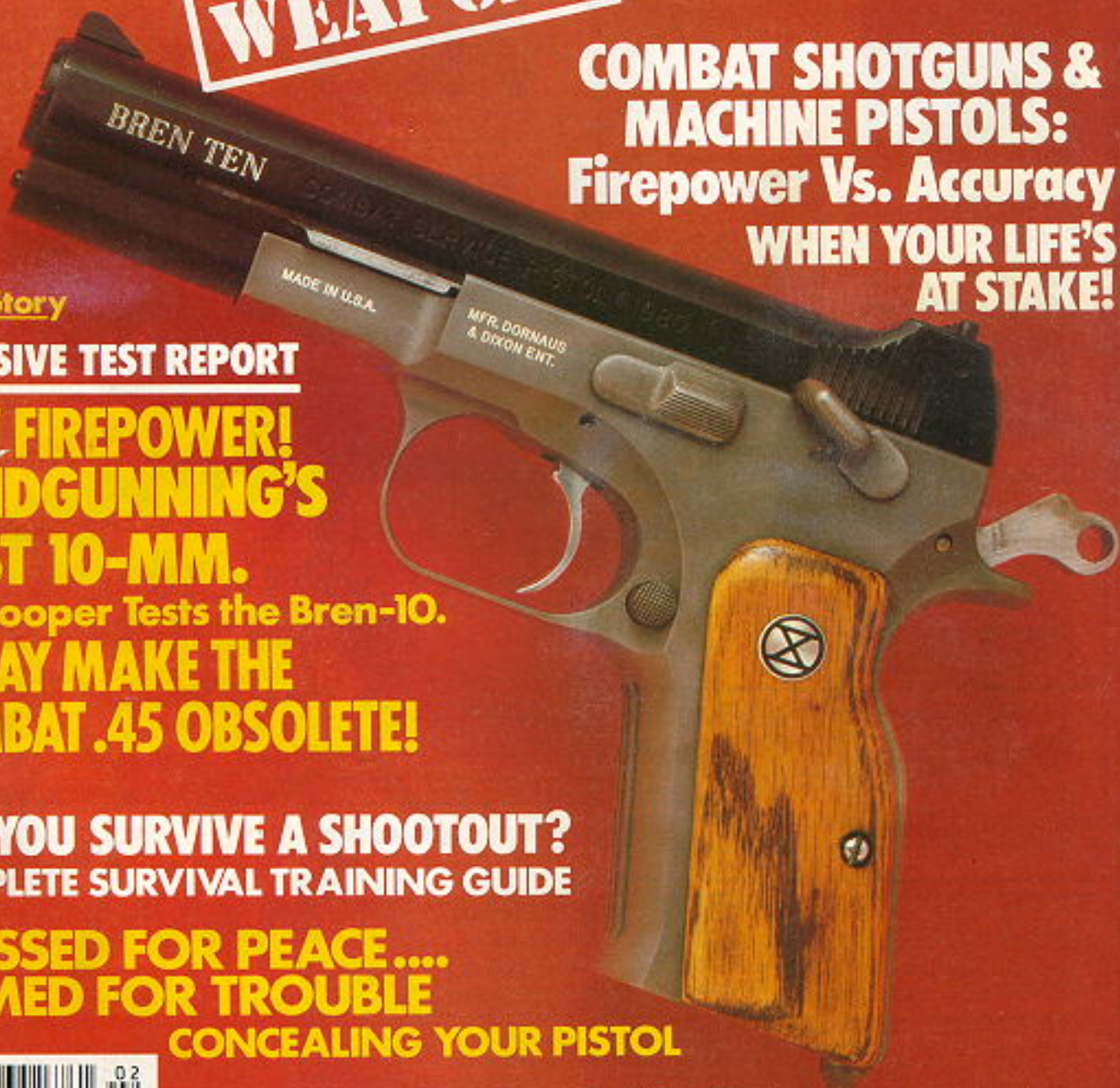
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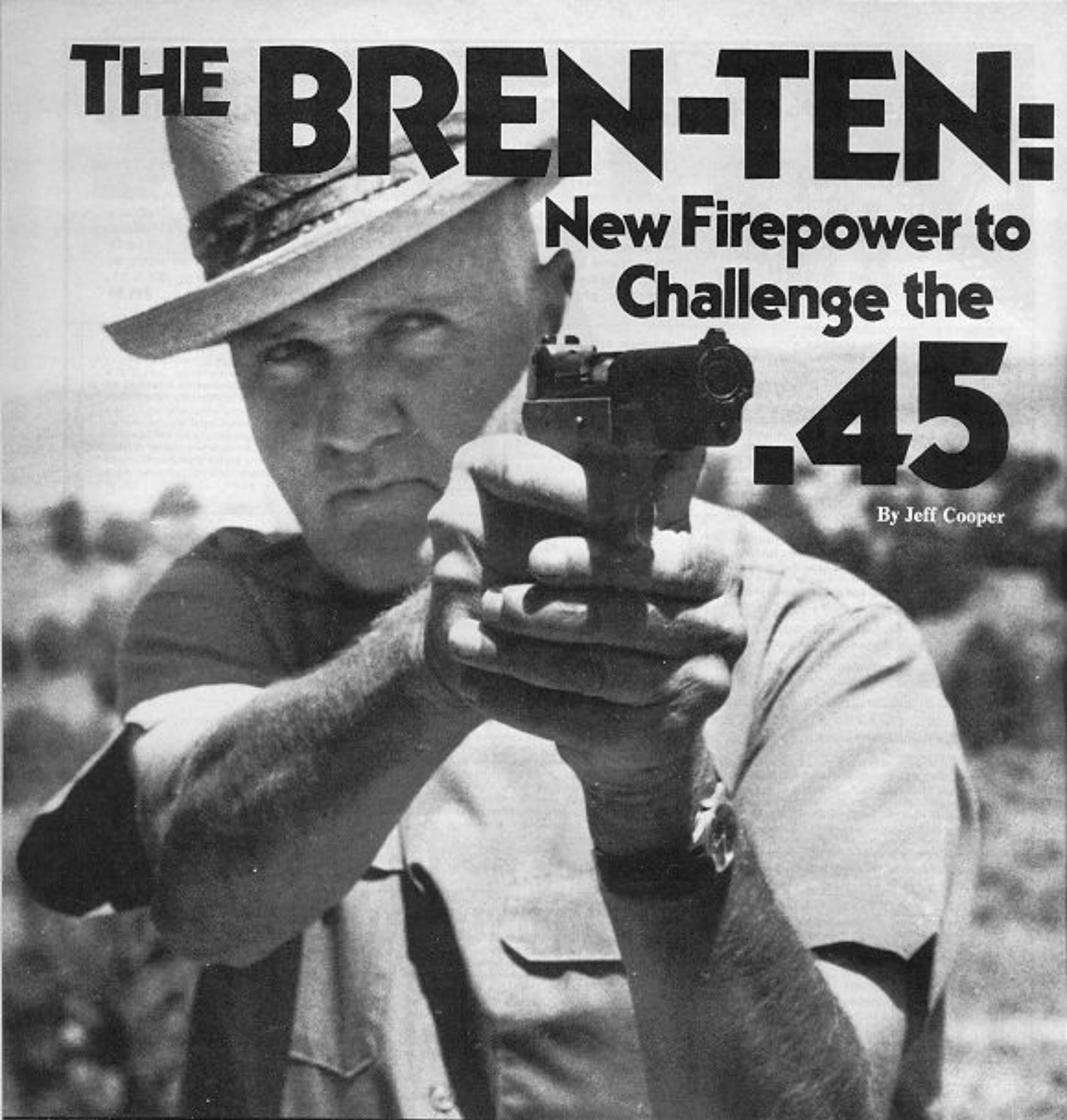


THE BREN-TEN:

New Firepower to
Challenge the

.45

By Jeff Cooper



Chairman Jeff's exclusive test report on the gun most likely to usher in a new era

Some years back Whit Collins, who was then on the staff of *Guns & Ammo* magazine, published his research into the history and evolution of forty-caliber pistol cartridges, culminating in an experi-

mental round which mated a shortened 30 Remington Rifle case with the 180-grain bullet of the old Winchester 38-40. This wildcat was fired from a much modified Browning P-35 and achieved notable bal-

listics—a modest charge of 6½ grains of Unique reaching 1165 f/s in just five inches.

Later another investigator utilized the belted Weatherby 224 case in similar fashion and called the result the "40 G&A Magnum," in current marketing jargon.

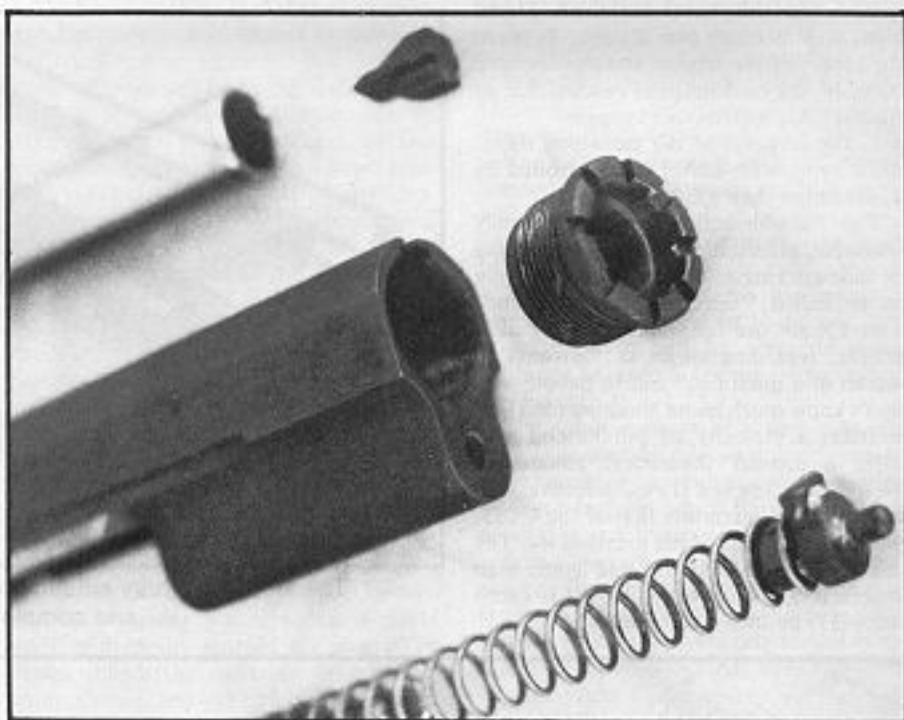
At a time when new (and usually pointless) cartridges appear almost weekly one may be forgiven a yawn at the debut of yet another, but that might be unwise in this case. Unlike the great majority of new calibers, this one has a real purpose and an exciting future. It is intended to re-

place both the 9mm Parabellum and the 45 ACP—and it just may!

Last year I wrote that the PSP and the Czech 75 needed only to be produced in a serious caliber to make them the "wave of the future"—the 75 as the final flower of proven design and the PSP ("pneumatic squeeze pistol") as the great leap forward. The Czechs are not about to build their M-75 in anything but 9mm, and while rumors abound H&K flatly deny any plans for a major-caliber version of their squeeze gun.

The time, however, is fully ripe, and two Californians—Tom Dornaus and Mike Dixon—have leapt into the breach and built a pistol that shows more promise than anything since the year 1911. This the *Bren Ten*. There is one in your future.

Immodest though it may seem to say it, I created the instrument by which the essential qualities of the combat pistol have been discovered. This was the program of open, unrestricted, diversified, realistic, *combat* competition now known as "practical pistol shooting." I promoted and conducted the first match, in 1956, and was ultimately elected first president of the International Practical Shooting Confederation in Salisbury in 1977.



A unique feature is the instantly replaceable front sight, which may be removed by field stripping.



At the head of the frame, a two-stage detent offers the option of full or partial ejection of the magazine. The pistol is slightly smaller than the 1911 Al Colt, with identical trigger reach when cocked.

Though I am indeed proud of this, I state it here only to explain why Dixon and Dornaus came to me for counsel when they decided to design the handgun of the future. My studies have distilled all of the discoveries of the past twenty-four years of practical shooting, and the Bren-Ten incorporates my conclusions.

Superficially the piece marries the Czech 75 to the 10mm auto pistol cartridge, but in the process it has been so extensively improved that about all that remains is general configuration—and that is all to

the good since the consensus seems to be that the 75 feels better in most hands than any other handgun. The Bren Ten feels almost exactly like the 75.

However, from that point onward, though many standard characteristics remain, a number of radical features have been added. The result is not only a weapon that has all the essential elements of a truly modern sidearm but is also completely ready for service *as it comes out of the box*. Bad news for the gun butchers!

To begin, the 10mm auto pistol cartridge is a stinger. Its designed performance starts a 40-caliber, 200-grain, JTC bullet at 1100 f/s, combining decisive power with excellent controllability. Its ample impact area (1.25 sq. in.) is still compatible with a case narrow enough to be accommodated in a double-row magazine that holds twelve rounds without requiring an oversized butt. Its Hatcher PSP (using a *k* estimate of 1.05) is 64, or slightly better than the 45 ACP, and it retains more kinetic energy at 100 meters than the 45 shows at the muzzle. For those who regard gelatin-splash as the true index of pistol power, it should splash gelatin all over the laboratory. Of course it totally overwhelms the 9mm Parabellum cartridge. Its penetration should prove adequate without being excessive, while AP ammunition may easily be developed to meet special requirements.

While range is not a significant factor in the performance of a combat pistol, the trajectory of the 10 is quite a bit flatter than that of the 45, and its superior projectile mass retains its long-range power better than that of any minor-caliber cartridge. (Additionally, it offers the fringe benefit of being legal in countries such as Mexico and Italy where military ammunition is forbidden.)

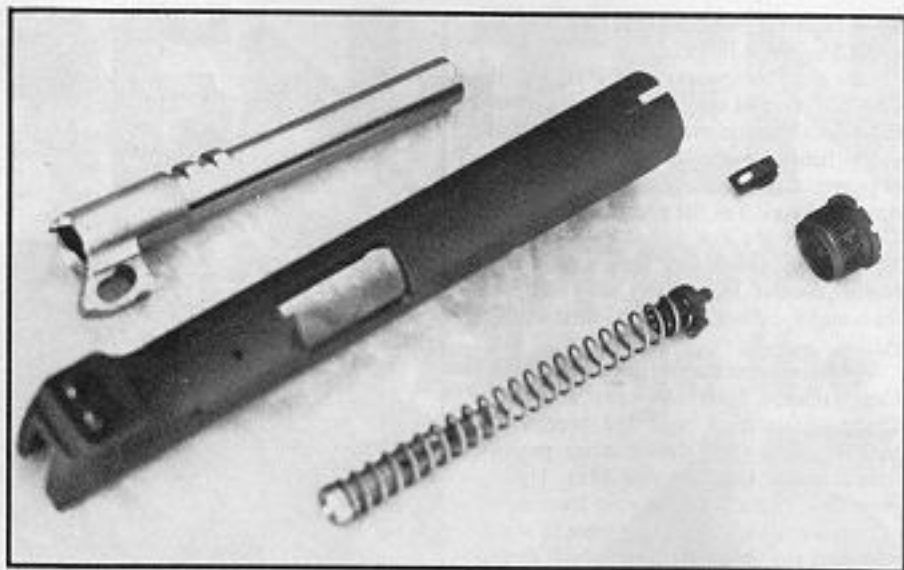
The decision was made to introduce the weapon and the cartridge simultaneously, so while the prototype takes the 45 ACP round, the Bren Ten will not be made for sale in that caliber, though a "Bren 45" may be produced at a later date.

The pistol is of normal size and weight for a heavy-duty defensive sidearm, though a small, single-column version is on the drawing boards, together with a 22 conversion unit. The prototype weighs two

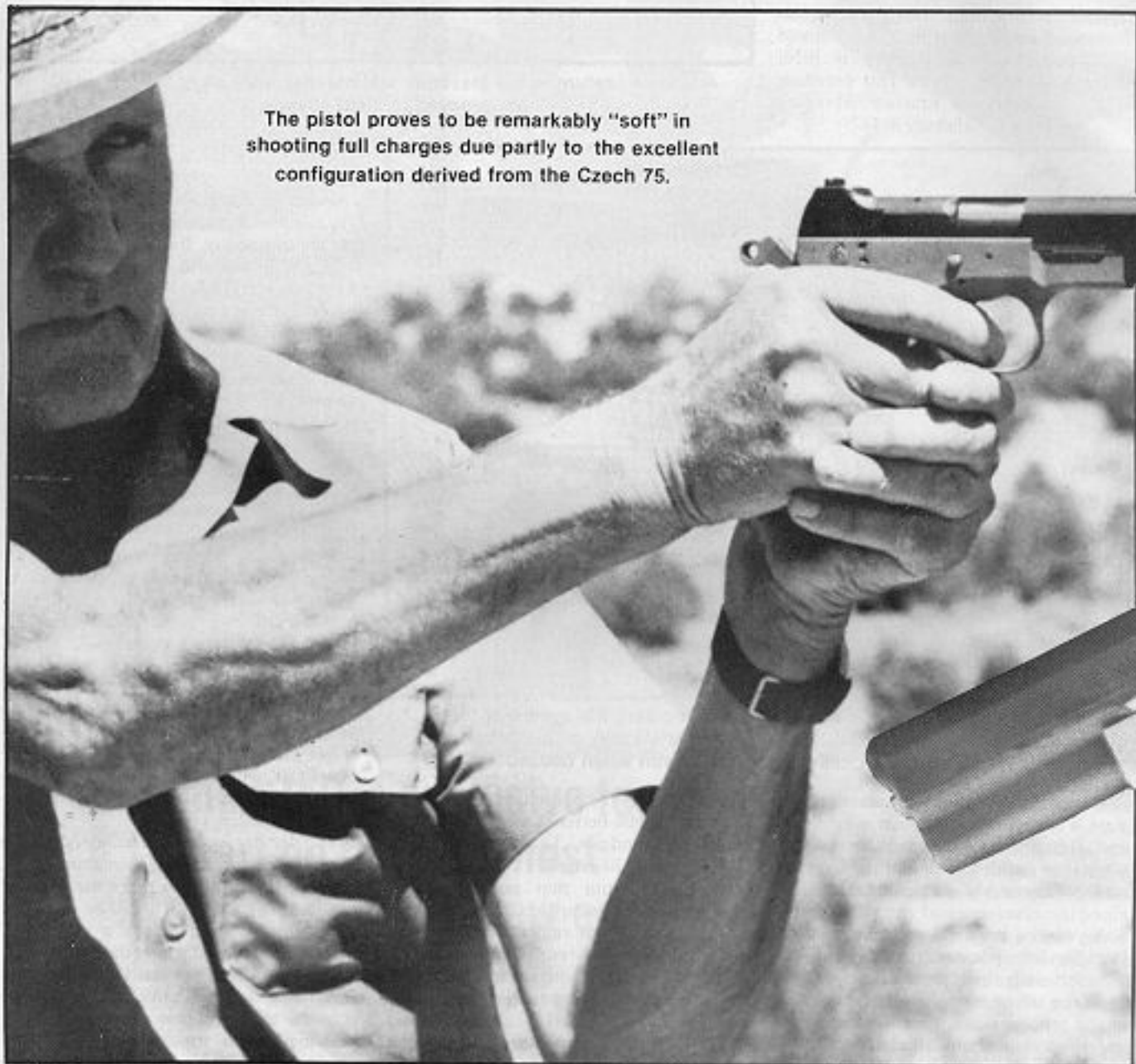
ounces less than a Government Model Colt, and its reach (the distance between the center of the trigger and the forward curve of the backstrap) is exactly that of the 1911 A1, with its short trigger.

The action is of the Browning short-recoil type, with barrel tilt controlled by a cam rather than a link.

The "double-action" lockwork really is *double*, affording either trigger-cocking or slide-cocking at option. This is coming to be called "selective double-action." I have scant use for trigger-cocking auto pistols, regarding them as "answers in search of a question," but to people who don't know much about shooting (and that includes a majority of purchasers) they offer a distinct theoretical advantage. So the Bren Ten is a D.A.—selective. The trigger action resembles that of the Cz 75, which has the best of the previous lot. The cocking stroke is smoother and lighter than expected, and the cocked let-off is excellent— $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds and ice-crisp.



The sights are fully adjustable, practically indestructible, and completely dehorned.



The pistol proves to be remarkably "soft" in shooting full charges due partly to the excellent configuration derived from the Czech 75.

The thumb safety of the Cz 75 is one of its best features, located forward at the small of the thumb, and that location was retained. However (and this is unique) the safety piece on the Bren Ten is manually reversible. It may be switched from right side to left by seller or owner—without tools. Regardless of what we see in competition, no one needs a safety on both sides of a pistol. A full speed stroke is only performed with the master hand, and if that is disabled the weak hand can easily operate the safety of the Bren Ten with the index finger. A reversible safety is such an obvious desideratum (one man in six or seven is left-handed) that one can only reflect that gun designers—until now—have never consulted shooters. This advanced thumb safety system eliminates any need for a grip-safety, so none is included.

The magazine release button is of the Browning type, and it does not reverse. (Some southpaws do not seem to realize that a button on the port side is easier for them to operate than for a right-hander.) A two-position magazine detent is located under the starboard stock, by means of which the magazine may either be shot free (as in a competition speed load) or retained under slight spring tension about three inches out. The latter option is provided for people working on boats or in deep mud or sand, as well as for those departments which regard dropped magazines as cause for disciplinary action. The magazine itself is of quick take-down design and fitted with a shock-resistant floor plate.

The barrel bushing is threaded to screw into the slide and is locked in place by the recoil-spring plunger. The bushing locks the front sight into the slide, so that the sight is removable and replaceable on field-stripping. The advantages of this arrangement are obvious but I must carefully point out that it was *not* my idea. Tom Dornaus dreamed it up and I thoroughly approve.

The sight picture is of the "three-dots-in-horizontal alignment" pattern pioneered (and then dropped) on the PSP. Precision alignment is achieved by a sharp patridge cut, and, for those who prefer it, black-on-black is quickly obtainable with a nail brush; but that row of three white dots does enable many people to catch a flash sight-picture a shade quicker. Obviously, if you want to change front sight color to suit your mood, you can do so anytime you disassemble the piece.

The fully adjustable rear sight is set into a sort revetment which forms a slight swelling atop the rear of the slide. The design shields the sight leaf from blows from almost any direction and should stand up well under very severe service. This rear sight mounting, as well as the entire rear end of the pistol, is completely "de-horned," without sharp corners or projections of any kind to tear either skin or clothing. Here again is an obvious feature that nobody offered til now.

The recoil spring guide incorporates a two-size screw-driver by means of which detailed stripping and sight adjustment may be effected—another forward step—

and the magazine floorplate flange is used to set up and release the barrel bushing by way of radial slots milled into the latter.

Naturally, the "burr" hammer and backstrap tang are so arranged as to make "hammer-bite" impossible.

Naturally, a smoothly designed conical lanyard loop is located on the heel of the butt.

Naturally, also, the entire piece is made of rust-free alloys.

There is no magazine disconnecter, which device has proven to be not only no guarantee of safe handling but also a distinctly hazardous feature under certain conditions.

The whole concept of a very powerful yet easily controllable service sidearm of large magazine capacity and incorporating all those features which have been found needful over a quarter century of "battle practice" is very exciting. If this concept can be effectuated by mass production at reasonable cost the results will be revolutionary. I have thrown out feelers overseas and the response has been galvanic. The question is, however, whether this pistol really can be so produced. I have examined, and fired, the prototype—and it works fine. It looks expensive, but Dixon and Dornaus assure me that production costs can be drastically reduced by means of computer technology if a proper start is made, and that they have worked out plans which largely eliminate labor costs. Could be. We are shooting for a retail price of \$450—in 1980 dollars.

Reliability and durability must remain unproven for a time. The first production guns will hold misfunctions to one-in-one-thousand—minus—or they will not be sold, but it will take years to build a reputation to match that of the venerated Brownings. Still, the feeding and locking systems of the Bren Ten are pretty conventional. There is no reason why they should *not* work.

Durability can be programmed, at least in the short-term sense. Careful analysis can anticipate most stresses, and if weak points turn up they can be strengthened.

As the author of the concept I am naturally enthusiastic, but I must guard against uncontrolled optimism. For example, the trigger on the prototype was excellent, but until every piece rolling off the line has one like it exultation will be premature.

It is not possible at this point to announce a production date. A second prototype, in 10mm, is being handmade as I write, but the ammunition for it is not yet available except experimentally. When that combination has been thoroughly tested at Sunsite (this winter I hope) it will be time to run off 50 pre-production units to test production methods and to serve as demonstrators. Only when those have stood up to severe service testing will orders be a while.

Nevertheless the Bren Ten is a bright light on the horizon. It could be the dawn of a new era, and I do not say that carelessly.



The selective double-action feature of the Bren-10 is unique in offering a reversible safety which can be installed in either side of the weapon without tools.