

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

From the thousands of questions and letters on guns, ammunition and their use that the *American Rifleman* receives every year, it publishes here the most interesting. Receiving answers to technical and historical questions is a privilege reserved to NRA Members.

Questions must be in the form of letters addressed to **Dope Bag, NRA Publications, 11250 Waples Mill Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030**, must contain the member's code line from an *American Rifleman* or *American Hunter* mailing label or membership card; must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed, legal-sized envelope, and must be limited to one specific question per letter. Non-members may submit a question with membership application. **We regret that we cannot answer technical or historical questions by telephone or fax, and that we cannot place even an approximate value on guns or other equipment of any description.**

MAKAROV ACCURACY

Q *My Russian-made Makarov pistol shoots 5" to 5½" groups at 25 yds. with military-type ball ammo. Is this accuracy typical of such pistols?*

A The USSR Ministry of Defense established accuracy standards for the Makarov at various target distances, and included these in the official instruction manual for the arm, published in 1957.

According to a recent English-language version of this manual, *The Official Makarov Pistol Manual* (translated by James F. Gebhardt and available from Desert Publications, Dept. AR, Box 1751, El Dorado, AR 71731-1751), the

Makarov pistol was expected to keep 100% of its hits within a 7.5 cm radius of dispersion at 25 meters. Converting from the metric system gives an expected group size of about 5.3" at 25 yds.—the same level of accuracy obtained by your gun.



Groups of 5" or more at 25 yds. meet the acceptance standards for Makarov pistols set by the Soviet military authorities.

In addition to its very thorough and detailed treatment of the functioning, design and maintenance of the Makarov, *The Official Makarov Pistol Manual* also gives a revealing

glimpse of Soviet military life 40 years ago. The section "Firing from horseback," now anachronistic, was still relevant in 1957; and the suggested live-fire training command, "From the prone position, at the deserter, fire!" highlights one of the Soviet military's major problems during the Cold War period.—S.L.W.

RING BULGES

Q *When discussing the use of steel shot, I keep hearing the term "ring bulge." What is that?*

A When steel shot, especially in the larger sizes like BBB, T and F, is fired in a shotgun not intended for steel shot, the barrel may be bulged all the way around at the choke. The bulge is caused when the hard mass of steel shot encounters the cone of the choke.



Steel shot fired through the lower barrel of a Winchester Model 101 over-under broke the soldered joint between the two barrels.

CHINESE M14 RIFLE

Q *I have heard stories that the Chinese-made M14 rifles imported a few years ago were made of soft steel. Are they safe?*

A Heat treatment of the Chinese M14 receivers has been reported to vary. Some shooters have experienced bolt lug setback and increased headspace after sev-

eral hundred rounds, while others have fired the rifles without incident. There is no known serial number range to identify soft receivers that corresponds with the "low number Springfield" model.

I would suggest you have your rifle's headspace checked by a knowledgeable gunsmith. If it is not excessive, continue to use the rifle while carefully monitoring your fired cases for any increase. After 500-1,000 rounds, have your gunsmith recheck the headspace. If the heat-treatment is improper, it should show up by then. At the same time, your gunsmith can check for proper firing pin protrusion, safety function, etc.

Alternatively, you can have the gun reheat-treated by Smith Enterprises



Some Chinese-made M14-style rifles have had inconsistent heat-treatment that can be corrected by reheat-treating.

(Dept. AR, 1701 W. 10th St., Suite 14, Tempe, AZ 85281). This brings all parts of the rifle up to proper hardness. Price of the process is \$195, which includes shipping.—O.R.C.

Research also indicates the choke is actually pushed forward a bit, stretching the barrel.

This is merely unsightly in a plain single-barreled gun, but will break the rib/barrel joint or the soldered joint between two barrels.

The stress of the bulge also can split the barrel. A local gunsmith reported that a Parker double gun fired with steel goose loads suffered a ring bulge that "unzipped"