

# JOINT PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE COMMITTEE SECRET PF-45 GUN DEVELOPED TO BEAT THE NAZI'S AND END WW2

by Joseph McClain

I propose a theory that might have been the beginning thought process for the development of the FP-45 Pistol. In 1989, Special Operations Executive (SOE) Advisor Gervase Cowell was doing some investigative work for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, England and found this note and sent the following letter:

*"I have come across one more minuscule reference in the transcript of conversation in 1981 with one of the personnel of the SOE's research establishment. ISRB (Inter-Service Research Bureau) It is as follows:*

*ISRB then became heavily commented to Operation MOON (later called Operation BRADDOCK). Winston CHURCHILL had read a popular novel on the Norwegian Resistance called "The Moon is Down" and was inspired to call for massive instantaneous uprising all over Europe for which the occu-*

*ried people would be flooded with masses of simple but lethal devices. The services had no time for this. ISRB got part of the job. Three new devices emerged. On was the 'liberator pistol'-very rough (and dangerous to fire) American pistol firing up to 3 rounds of .45 ammunition."*<sup>1</sup>

Is it possible that a book written by John Steinbeck called *The Moon is Down* with the final thoughts for the reader "Give us guns, simple secret weapons of stealth, explosives, dynamite, grenades, and even poison to fight with"<sup>2</sup> had impressed Winston Churchill so much. Could this book have planted the seed so deep that he expressed his desire to the American President? Because of the secret classification of the FP-45 Pistol, we probably will never know how the gun began.

As I grew up in Anderson, Indiana, we had many General Motors (G.M.) plants that employed 50,000 people. As World War II

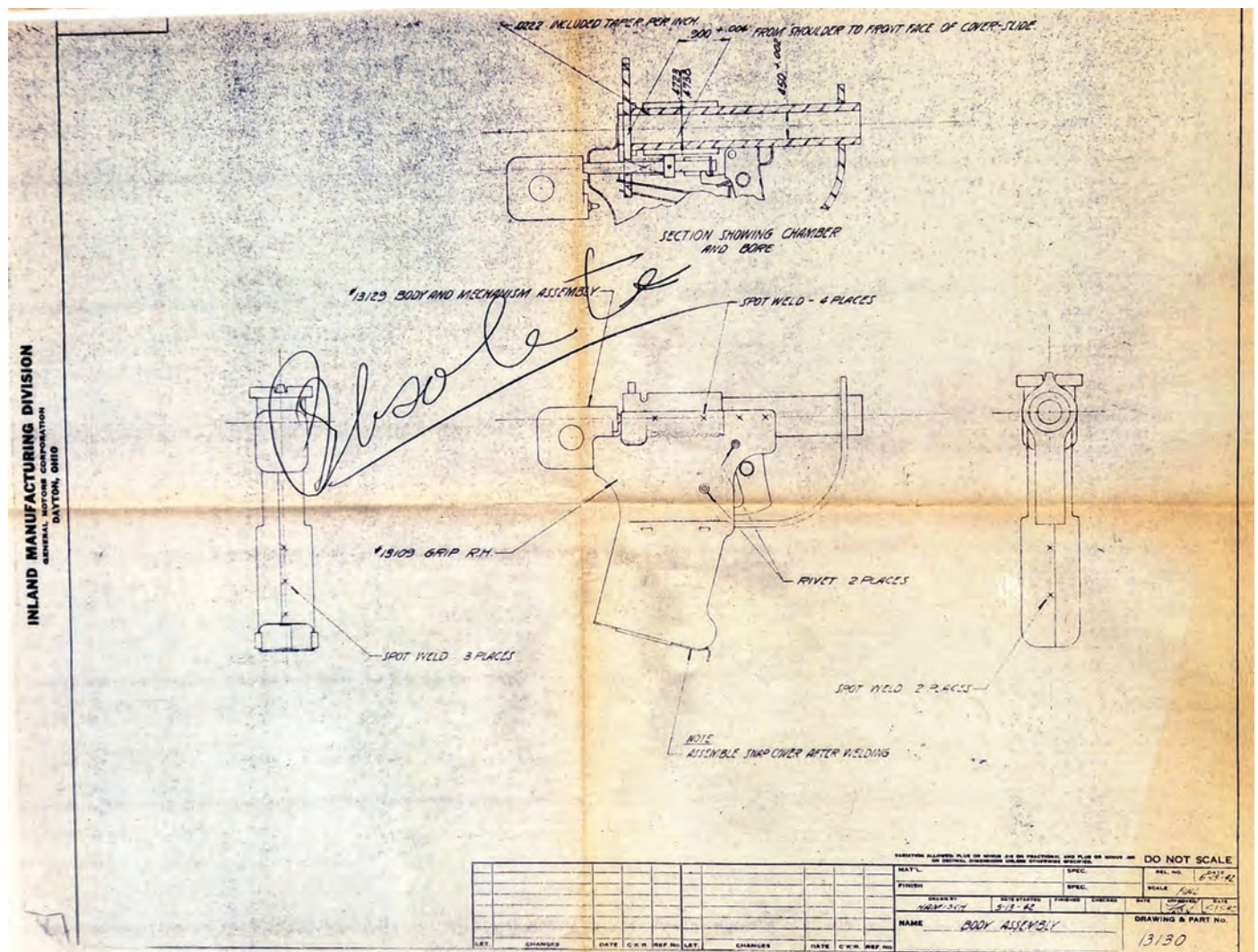


Figure 1. Blueprint for the FP-45. All blueprints regarding this gun that were not destroyed were marked "Obsolete" as I was told by Guide Lamp Officials.

was starting, G.M. and their corporation division wanted to support the war effort. So, they began bidding on many different contracts. One division of G. M. was Guide Lamp, which created a new process of sheet metal stamping which offered a new concept in creating a gun cheaply for around \$1.00.



Figure 2. Guide Lamp Division in Anderson, Indiana of General Motors; aerial layout of the factory (top), interior range for testing firearms (center) and security badges from the production plant (bottom)

The Liberator Pistol Project history started on March 5th, 1942, in the following memorandum:

*“Memorandum for the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2 March 11, 1942. On March 5th, the Chief of the Eastern European Section referred to this office a memorandum, as follows: Polish Military Attaché requested information on the following: What agency can be contacted which can make available arms and supplies to the population in Nazi occupied territory for revolt and rebellion? Type of equipment desired-hand weapons, explosives, grenades, light machine guns and ammunitions.”*<sup>1</sup>

The Polish Military Attache has been contacted, and it appears that this is a matter concerning the psychological warfare which must be taken up by the Joint Psychological Warfare Committee. Recommendation was that this be the sole decision of this Committee for action on March 20, 1942.

A study on the proposed rearming of civilians under Axis Control was done yielding valuable information. Starting with a base line of information that people under Axis control were disarmed and could not organize any defense. This made them helpless against dominant control. It is believed that a large number of men, women, and older children would enthusiastically rebel against the Axis domination if provided help in equipment and training. Also, the psychological advances achieved would be a demoralization of the occupying Axis troops that policed the country; an energizing of will by civilians to retaliate and gain their freedom back, and with the civilians knowing that they are not alone in this fight gives them the strength to do sabotage acts with less fear of the consequences.

After several prior meetings in the months before, on May 12th, 1942, a gathering of Officers from the Army Ordnance, executives from Inland Division of G. M., and Guide Lamp Division of G. M. went to Washington to discuss the details and problems of the proposed handgun. Out of the meeting Guide Lamp emerged as the logical group to build a prototype. On May 25th, 1942, the project received a deceptive name for this weapon which they called “Flare Signal Pistol” (FP-45).

Moving forward after the May 12th, 1942, meeting, Inland Manufacturing Division of G. M. located in Dayton, Ohio assigned George Hyde to the project. He was well qualified to do the prototype, being hired to do design and weapon research as a gunsmith designing the Hyde Carbine and he had worked for years for Griffin and Howe optics. He even worked as a gunsmith and armorer for the Imperial German Army in WW1.<sup>3</sup>

After a pistol was made by George Hyde in his workshop showing proof of concept, the project moves forward again by adding two very skilled draftsman (Paul Hamisch and Allen Everitt) to develop blueprints for production purposes. Every part (23 parts more or less) was evaluated, approved, and measured, then a blueprint was created with a secret code name.<sup>4</sup>

A room 25 feet by 25 feet was set aside for development of the Prototype FP-45 in an Inland facility in Dayton, Ohio. In this secret room, Mr. Hyde created the final prototype and after test firing it concluded it to be acceptable. He then built four more guns to the same standards to satisfy his own perfection before allowing the final blueprints to be made (Figure 1). The blueprints were sent to G. M. plants for use in manufacturing the separate parts for assembly of the FP-45 Project.



Figure 3. Detailed view of a FP-45 Liberator pistol. The open space in the bottom of the grip (lower left) stored additional ammunition (see frame 12 in Figure 4).

On May 12, 1942, that same day that the blueprints were being finished the Chief of Military Intelligence Service in Washington initiated an order for 1,000,000 pistols. That triggered a meeting of Officers from Army Ordnance, executives from Inland Division of G. M., and Guide Lamp Division of G. M. to discuss the next set in the manufacturing of this pistol. Much discussion was created because each division of General Motors wanted the contract. But on May 15, 1942, the contract for the FP-45 Pistol was signed by the military and G. M. Then General Motors assigned the Contract to Guide Lamp Division in Anderson, Indiana (Figure 2). This was the perfect decision for the contract because of the new welding systems, the new sheet metal processes, and the labor force already assembled at this plant. Over 300 people were sworn to secrecy and then started working on the project. They were working 24 hours a day and 7 days a week to finish the million pistols needed (Figure 3) and get them to the war effort. Over one and half million rounds of 45 APC rounds were used to test the pistols, and another million 45 APC rounds were sent with the pistols.<sup>5</sup>

The next step in the evolution of the Liberator FP-45 was distribution. The pistols (along with instructions for use, Figure 4) were boxed up and sent to Frankfort Arsenal. Only 500,000 of the one million pistols were needed according to General Eisenhower and they were repacked to British requirements then sent to Britain by ship arriving in October 1942. In England, at Ashchurch, and Tid-

worth storage facility, 856 guns were sent to Sweden from March to December 1943. In November 1943 30,000 guns were sent to the British War Office to be distributed as they see the need. Also, from Britain, El Kubra Station in Egypt in the Nile Delta received 1,000 guns, Bombay, India received 5,000 guns and Gibraltar received 24,000 guns. On the orders of General MacArthur, 50,000 (known as the LEFT-ORD- II Pistol) were sent to Australia from August 1942 to March 1943 then distributed to Borneo, Tulagi, Philippines, Guadalcanal, Malaysia, and New Guinea by the Allied Intelligence Bureau with code name "Cactus". All distributed by Frankfort Arsenal.<sup>6</sup>

After the shipment to Australia, 450,000 guns remained at Frankfort Arsenal in storage. In January 1943, the Army and Frankfort Arsenal sent a communication to the OSS that they had 450,000 guns in storage and that Arsenal needed to disperse them as soon as possible because they needed the space and did not want to scrap them. August 1943, 100,000 guns were shipped to Jorhat, India where 26,780 guns (known as the Woolworth Gun by the SACO) went to China under the U.S. Navy Sino American Co-operative Organization (SACO) Operation on October 1943. The SACO group had 14 camps in China and about 100,000 guerrillas. An unknown quantity was shipped to Raritan Arsenal then 6 were transferred to the C.I.A.<sup>7</sup>

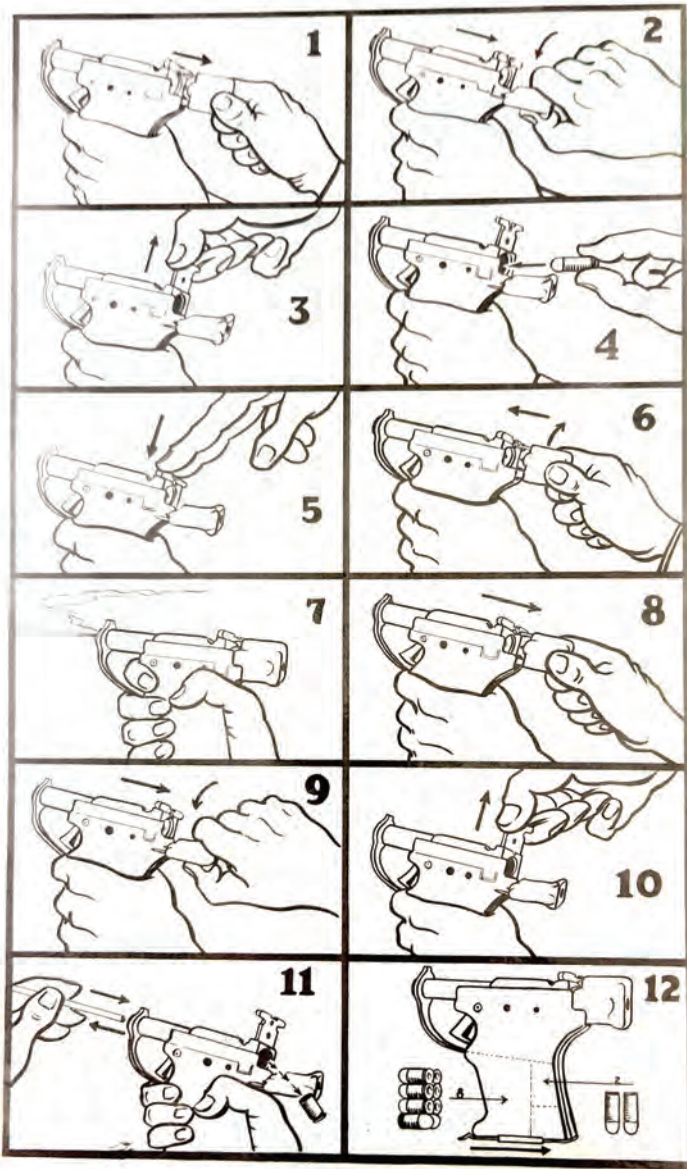


Figure 4. Instruction on how to load and fire the Liberator pistol

From July to November 1943, 313,000 guns were sent to Letterkenny Ordnance Depot in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Then in July 1944, the Depot sent 40,000 guns to Algiers. In October 1944, the Depot sent 40,000 guns to Livorno, Italy. Also in 1944, many guns went to Greece. The Depot sent ten guns to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Washington and 700 guns to the OSS headquarters at West point. In July 1944, the depot sent 200,000 guns to Calcutta, India which 40,000 guns then were sent to Ceylon in September of that year and in October they sent 44,000 guns to Rangoon, Burma.<sup>8</sup> The total number of guns distributed does not add up to the manufacture amount. One can only assume that the rest of the guns were destroyed in some manor or another.

## AUTHOR'S IN SIGHT REVIEW

### 1942-2025 – 83 YEARS

Looking back 83 years; the author prefers to consider this project an Outstanding Success!

For the following reasons:

- Looking at the timeline and realizing the gun was requested March 5, 1942 and almost six months later August 21, 1942

1,000,000 guns were delivered to Frankfort Arsenal. Though acts of the Idea, the Concept, the Proof of concept, the Prototype, the Blueprints, and then Manufacturing, all done under secrecy. This is an unheard-of timeline back then and even today. This is impossible to achieve or even wrap your head around the idea that it could be done. Do you think that if you didn't know it couldn't be done but had a war effect desire that "Anything is Possible"?

- Can you imagine having a preliminary cost cap given to you for \$1.00 to \$2.00 even in yesterday's values! This was achieved by a new and innovative stamping process developed by Guide Lamp Division and the simplicity of the design of the gun.
- Also, from a psychological warfare aspect that the threat of being able to build millions of guns to arm the civilian population in an affordable budget must have weighed heavy on the mind of the leaders of the axis nations.
- Another amazing thing is that this project was considered secret, and even for 60 plus years the workers refused to talk about the project. I don't think the a-bomb was kept that secret.

The quality of the PF-45 liberator gun was scary to shoot in my opinion. A pipe was used as a barrel. The sheet metal, although tack welded, was not built for endurance. Have said that, it served to purpose for the time.

To maintain secrecy there were a number of code name changes for the secret project:

Beginning with code word Operation Moon by Winston Churchill

Then code word Operation Braddock by the English Government

Then code word Operation Signal Flare by the U.S. Joint Psychological Warfare Committee

Also noted: the OSS called them Flare Guns.

Then Liberator or Woolworth Gun in the United States

Then code word SUMAC for Australia

Then code word POPPY for New Caledonia

Then code word CACTUS for Guadalcanal and Tulagi

Then code word LEFT-ORD-II for Brisbane, Australia

Then code word FP-45 for France, England, Greece, and Belgium

Then code word SACO for China

Then code word KANGAROO PISTOLS for the Philippine Islands

Then code word FP-45 PISTOLS for Norway and Denmark

With all these code word changes, it would seem that the Joint Psychological Warfare Committee achieve their goal of confusing the German Nazi's into believing this project was bigger than it was and it would change the balance of the war.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Hagan, Ralph. *Liberator Pistol: Development, Production, Distribution, Plus Information on the O.S.S. Stinger and C.I.A. Deer gun*. Target Sales, 1996
- <sup>2</sup> Steinbeck, John. *The Moon Is Down*, Viking Press, N.Y., 1942
- <sup>3</sup> Hagan, Op. cit. Pp. 6-7, 20-25.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid. P. 36.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. Pp. 8-9, 20-25.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pp. 69-83.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. P. 83.
- <sup>8</sup> Koch, R.W. *The FP-45 Liberator 1942-1945*, Research Publisher, Library of Congress #76-40361, 1976. Pp. 1-19.

