

Collecting and Shooting the Military Surplus Rifle



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M59/66 SKS  **UNISSUED**
Inter Ordnance of America L



Article Written by: Jamie Mangrum

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figure 1



djm

Long Rifle 6.5 mm M 91/41

The M91/41 Fucile (Long Rifle) or the Mannlicher Carcano Model 1891/41 Long Rifle was manufactured from 1941 to 1945. It is a turn-bolt, modified Mauser design. The rear sight is adjustable from 300 to 1000 meters with a 200 meter battle sight. The rifle is chambered in the 6.5x52 Carcano. The Mannlicher designation comes from the fact that the rifle uses a Mannlicher-type magazine system.

I started doing something lately that I have never done before. I started trading and selling some of my mil-surp firearms (*gulp!*). Just the ones that I had more than one of, had never shot, and for the



most part could not remember why I had purchased to begin with. My wife hints that I have some sort of **Compulsive Mil-Surp Collecting Disorder (New Medical Acronym: CMSCD)**. My theory is that wives will say just about anything to get you to clean out the garage! My other theory is that **your** collections just compete with space that could be occupied by **her** collections. I am afraid to bring up this theory with her for discussion though.

Recently a friend of mine had a bunch of rifles that were duplicates of others he owned and he was looking to get rid of them (*Like mine, his wife had probably been speaking with him*). I made the hour and a half drive twice out to his house to peruse through what he was getting rid of. Each time I was very pleased to find rifles that I did not already have in my collection.

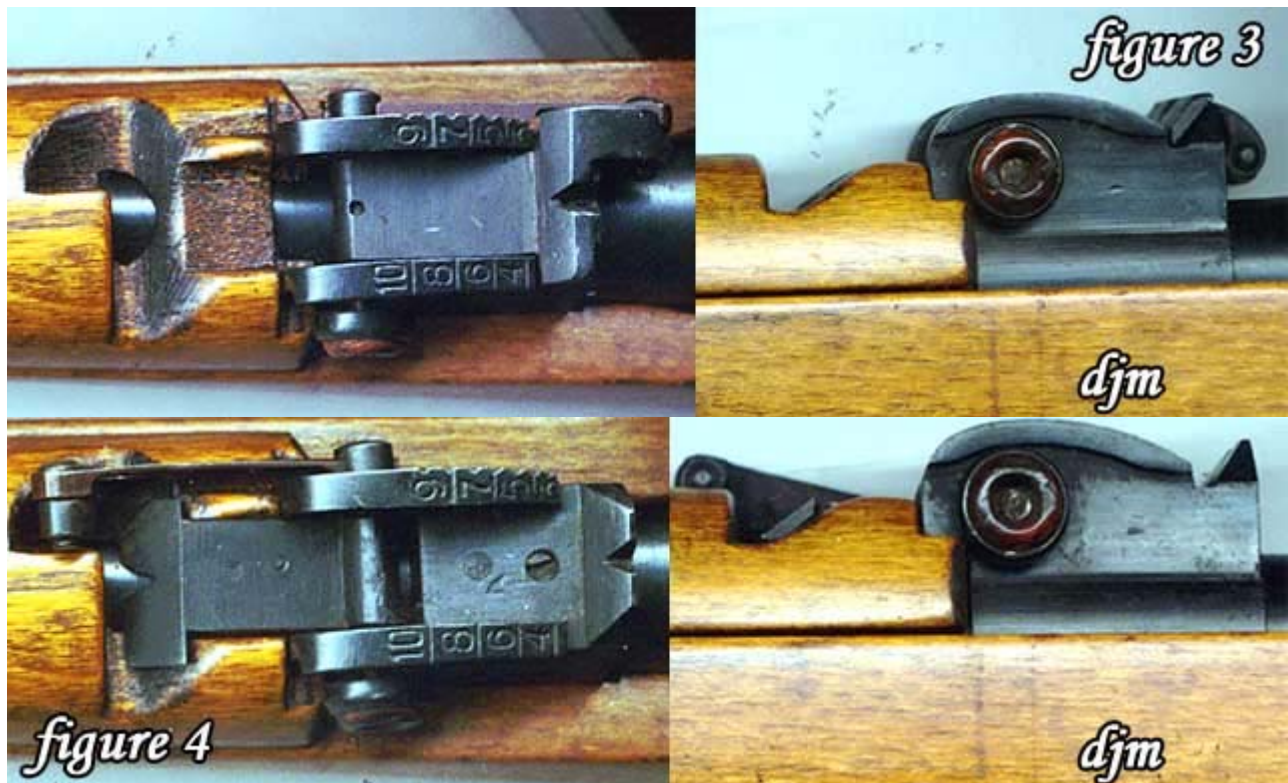
On one of the trips I picked up a couple of really, really nice Carcano rifles. This is a difficult feat in of itself. You just do not see Carcano rifles anymore, much less nice Carcano rifles. Like most people I have been spoon fed opinions by gun writers over the years about Carcanos and they are for the most part negative opinions. When I finally got a chance to sit down and clean the two rifles (*a Mannlicher Carcano 91/38 and a Mannlicher Carcano 91/41*) and take my time to really examine them closely, I was really surprised by the quality of the workmanship. My favorite of the two is the 91/41 which is the basis for this range report.

The 91/41 is an sleek and elegant rifle that reminds me of many of the great long barreled Mausers. The stock wood is dense and solid and the overall fit and finish of the rifle is similar to a high quality Mauser. I know, I know....a lot of folks will say that I am nuts for making the comparison between the 91/41 and a Mauser. The conclusion I have come to and will report here is that the Mannlicher Carcano 91/41 is an excellent rifle in just about every way and easily stands its ground when compared to some of the better Mausers.

A Couple of Good Carcano Web Sites

<http://www.rememuseum.org.uk/arms/rifles/armisrc.htm>

<http://personal.stevens.edu/~gliberat/carcano/>



The rear sight is a very interesting and compact sight model when compared with a traditional military bolt action rifle's rear sight. When you depress the large round button on the left hand side, the adjustable sight can swing up and down the gradient from 300 meters to 1000 meters (**figure 3**). When you swing the rear sight all the way forward and lock it into place it reveals a 200 meter battle sight (**figure 4**).



Talk about a great sight picture!

The 91/41 has an aging man's (*self description*) dream sight picture (*as shown in figure 5*).

It has an oversized "V" that is sooooo....easy to focus on and align with the front sight post.

I tried shooting using both the adjustable sight as well as the open battle sight. I found both sights were easy to use and accurate.



I really like the Mannlicher type magazine system found on the 91/41 and other Carcano rifles and carbines. The ammo (**figure 6**) and en bloc clips are a little hard to come by, but can be found. The clips are loaded with 6 cartridges (**figure 6, top right**) at a time. You insert the loaded clips into the top of the receiver (**figure 6, bottom left**) and the empty clip then exits the bottom of the magazine (**figure 6, bottom right**). The one down side of the magazine system is that it is not designed to be loaded without the use of the en bloc clip. You can load less than 6 cartridges into the clip and insert it into the magazine. The follower will rest against the bottom cartridge and still function normally.

[Graf & Sons](#) has recently (*over the past couple of years*) rolled out Hornady Custom ammunition for the 6.5 Carcanos (**figure 7**) and many other mil-surp rifles.

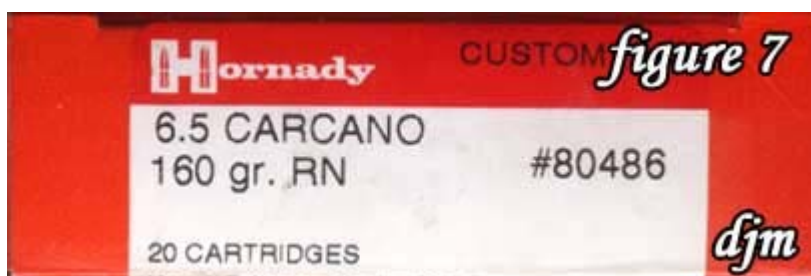
Graf & Sons now sells Hornady ammunition in:

[6.5mmx50 Japanese](#), [6.5mmx52 Carcano](#), [6.5mmx55 Swedish Mauser](#), [7.5mmx55 Swiss](#), [7.65mmx53 Argentine Mauser](#), [7.7mmx58 Japanese](#), [7mmx57 Mauser](#), [8mmx57 Mauser](#), [8x56R Hungarian Mannlicher](#), and [7.92x33 KURZ](#).

The Hornady 6.5 Carcano ammo is loaded with a 160 grain bullet and I found it to be very accurate and easy to shoot (*no excessive recoil*). It is non-corrosive and because it is boxer primed, the brass is reloadable which is a big plus. I also shot some Norma manufactured 6.5 Carcano ammo but found it did not perform quite as well as the Hornady in my rifles. The Hornady is priced at around \$20 for a box of 20 cartridges. Shooting the Carcano with commercial ammo can get expensive real quick. There are few alternatives.

Carcano surplus ammo is difficult to find and when you do it is most likely plagued with symptoms of aging and improperly stored ammunition ([hang fires](#) and *general poor condition*). Reloading is the most economical alternative. There is plenty of load information out on the net and in manuals. Good [Norma brass is available](#) for around \$18 per 20 and \$73 per 100. Graf offers 100 [brass cases](#) for only \$28.99 which is the best deal.

Carcano Reloading Info Websites
http://personal.stevens.edu/~gliberat/carcano/ammo/reload.html
http://reload.thor420.com/65x52carcano.htm
http://members.nuvox.net/~on.melchar/65carcano/index.html

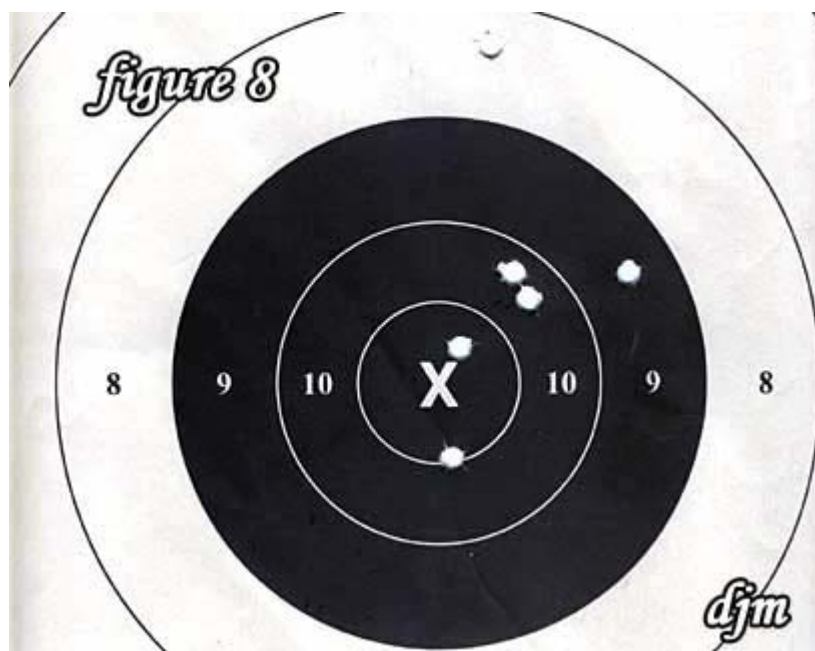


Muzzle	100 yards	200 yards	300 yards
2250 fps	+4.18 Inches	0.0 Inches	-16.42 Inches

The trigger on the 91/41 is a very traditional military two stage trigger. The take up was smooth and the trigger pulled through at around 7 lbs. Not too bad for a military trigger. I have pulled far worse. At least it is consistent and very smooth.

Just an observation: When examining the trigger with the rifle disassembled I would have to say that it is a little complex in design and function for a military bolt action rifle. But the complexity is nothing when compared to the trigger design of a modern commercial bolt action rifle or most military semi-auto rifles. You can view the components that make up the trigger in the [disassembly and reassembly instructions](#) here in the [Mannlicher Carcano 1891/41 section](#).

Figure 8 shows my very first target I shot at 100 yards. I set the adjustable sight at the 300 meter setting. I then aimed at the very bottom of the target, dead center. I was anticipating that the bullet climb would be comparable to other long military bolt action rifles. The range did not have SR-1 100 yard targets, so I had to use



50 yard targets which have a smaller bulls eye and are more difficult to see. As seen in **figure 8**, windage was already dialed in and I had only one flyer at the top of the 8 ring otherwise the grouping was not bad at all. As I said before, the 91/41's sights are excellent and even with the smaller target it was easy to shoot accurately.

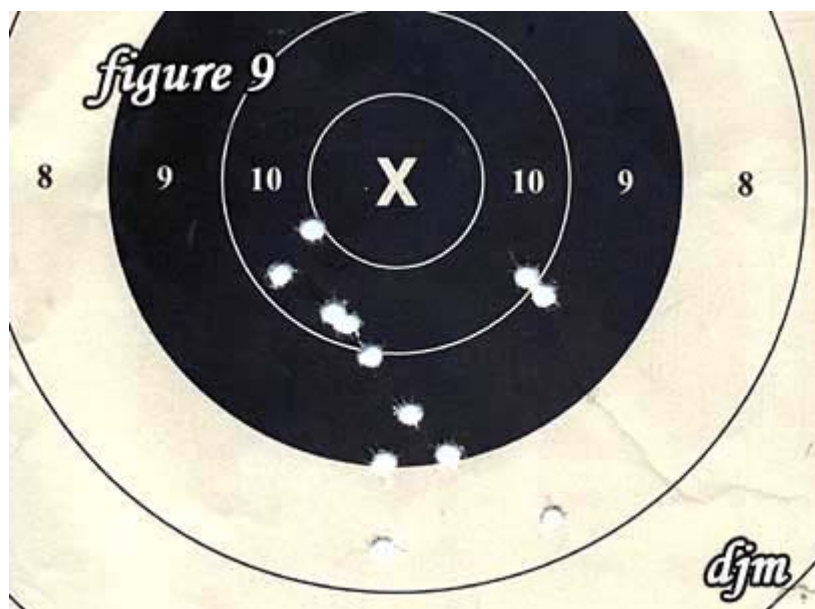


Figure 9 shows two clips of 6 cartridges shot using the battle sight. Again, I aimed at the very bottom of the target, dead center. **Note:** Both targets (**figures 8 & 9**) were shot with the Hornady ammo and are representative of the consistent groupings I was able to achieve. When shooting the Norma ammo I was unable to keep my groups tight or even in the black for that matter. The Norma ammo is a much lighter 139 grain soft point boat tail bullet.

A lot of folks over the years including Mussolini himself have maligned the Carcano rifles. In this I have to admit that after owning a model 91/41 and three other Carcanos I believe this opinion to be incorrect. Many studies have proven that the Carcano rifles when in good working order and with a good supply of ammunition can be a formidable and excellent weapon. The 91/41 and most other Carcanos are well made rifles that exhibit old world craftsmanship and are a fine addition to anyone's collection. The problem is finding one that has neither been sporterized or thrashed beyond belief. But when you do find a good specimen you will find as I have that any preconception you had leaning towards the negative was not true.

On my Compulsive Disorder....I have now gotten rid of quite a few duplicate and according to my wife unnecessary rifles. The only problem is I replaced them with necessary rifles.

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