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*The change  
in me is  
amazing  
both myself  
and my  
friends'*

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## "IT'S QUITE A STORY"

# A GUN AND THE MEN BEHIND IT

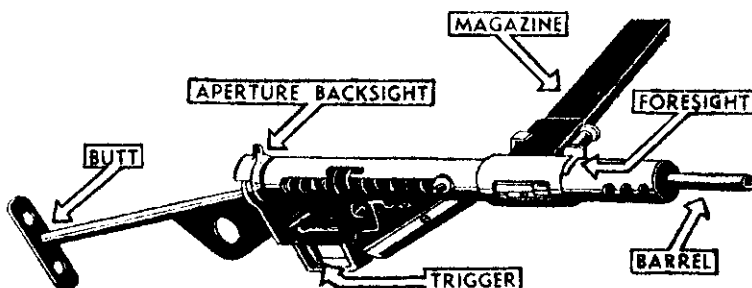
IT'S been said pretty often: that New Zealanders have a genius for improvisation. If it hasn't been true before, then it certainly is true of the men who make the Sten Gun in New Zealand. It's quite a story.

Many branches of the armed forces have need of a light automatic. Tank crews, despatch riders, airmen—anyone with need of a weapon that could be stowed in a confined space—these have normally been equipped with service revolvers—Webley's clumsy cannon. War in the Pacific woke us to a new value in light automatics. The war went into the bush, and the slow-firing service

problem was to find the metal. We needed the best possible steel for the barrel and the bolt; and even for the pressed metal air jacket, the piece of piping that serves as a stock, the flat sheet metal that's pressed to make the magazine, trigger guard, trigger, etc.; we needed materials not easily come by in the land of milk and honey.

That is where the improvisation came in. We had several thousand old Lee Enfield rifles, no longer fit for service.

Some unnamed genius—one among all the anonymous miracle-workers who make the wheels go round in New Zealand's growing industry—some genius thought of using these old rifles for the value of their barrels. Nine millimetres



rifle did not perform very well in close-quarters fighting, however good it might be as a weapon in open country.

One answer was the Thompson sub-machine gun. But the Tommy has not proved itself the complete answer. It is heavy in itself, and spews out heavy ammunition (.45) at a costly rate of fire. No doubt a gunsmith's dream of perfection, but the armies of 1942-43 have been wondering if perfection is the answer for a war that's always in a hurry. Perfection seemed to be too good.

### Easier And Handier

So the Sten is mechanically crude in comparison. It can be made in a hurry, and used in a hurry—slung together and slung away when it's worn out. Its parts have nothing like the fine tolerance of the machining in more expensive weapons. One five-thousandth of an inch is plenty, and if it gets sand or mud in the works, it shoots them out with its nine millimetre rounds of ammunition.

For the munition maker it's easier, and for the soldier it's more handy—even if it's killing impact is not so heavy. It weighs less than seven pounds, much lighter than is, than the Lee Enfield Service Rifle, much lighter than the Tommy Gun. It has about 50 parts, nearly all of them made from pressed metal, and easily adapted to mass production. Carrying the same weight, the soldier has many more nine millimetre rounds than he has of the .45 inch rounds required for the Tommy gun.

It doesn't hit as hard, but it hits very fast—at the rate of about 500 rounds per minute.

### Finding the Material

Altogether, the Sten was a likely sort of weapon for us in New Zealand. The

is a few points bigger than .303 of an inch. The next step was to find an engineering shop where they could straighten these old barrels and ream them out to the new bore.

The engineering shop was found in one city. Five hundred miles away we found another workshop prepared to turn over its battery of presses to the manufacture of other parts. In a month the Sten Gun was in production. Modifications followed as New Zealand engineers began to take short cuts. Every prettiness was cut out of the gun. It became an ugly, 30-inch length of killing efficiency, stripped to the bone. A quick change in organisation, and the second order of Sten's began coming out of those poky, unknown engineering shops that buttress New Zealand's principal factories. The total of this second order and the ones that are following cannot be announced. Even the Home Guard would be happy if they knew!

### Early History

In Britain, the Sten is the Sten. In Australia, the Sten is the Austen. In New Zealand, the name seems to be one thing we haven't had time to settle. In some places the gun is known as the Armaf, because of its dual use in Army and Air Force.

The gun was originally designed in Britain, and the first model took one month. In December 4, 1940, Lieut-Col. R. V. Shepherd, a British Arms expert, and Mr. Turpin, a draughtsman (his name should be Dick), combined their talents, and the result was ready by January 4, 1941. The need was stated to them, and they did their job; as

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