

I just got back from a visit to [Oberndorf a. Neckar in Germany](#) (where the Mauser company was formed and operated until the 1990s) and Brussels, Belgium.

I'll post some of the pictures I took at the meeting of Mauser historians I attended as well as some from the [Belgium Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History](#).

First, a quick picture of the Mauser historians meeting at the [Oberndorf Weapons Museum](#) (located in the building Mauser built to fulfill the Swedish rifles contracts and manufacture the C-96 handgun):



Above are the group that met in the Oberndorf Weapons Museum. They include one of the inventors of the Picatinney Rail, Mauser's marketing manager, two collectors flanking the last chairman of Mauser; both authors of the new book on Paul Mauser drawn from his private personal archives and (at the far right) me! I am the editor of the book, which is being published this fall. I also created the documentary film, "The Legacy of Paul Mauser" which premiered at this event. It will be released later this year.

Below are views of the Cloister Church which housed Mauser's showroom, residence and offices"



This is an overview of Oberndorf with the Swedish Bureau building where the Museum is located bottom center:



During WW-II, the only Mauser buildings destroyed were the apartments in the Cloister Church where Mauser had lived before 1914 (then an office) and the power house generation station behind the Cloister church. The building "C" where K988 rifles were manufactured was destroyed by the French after they occupied Oberndorf at the end of WW-II, but building "D" where Lugers and P.38 handguns were manufactured still stands. Here's a picture of the bombing damage at the cloister:



At the top of the hill above Oberndorf is the current Heckler and Koch factory in Lindenhof:



The Weapons Museum has a very complete collection that spans the entire history of Mauser including origins through their WW-II armament production. It also includes a Mauser automobile, measuring instrumentation and a number of other products that they produced in the years between WW-I and WW-II.

First, some early rifles from the black powder era:



Next, the patent model of the famous Mauser 3-Lug bolt mechanism. This ultra-strong bolt and chamber system formed the basis of Mauser sales of millions of rifles worldwide. The bolt was the subject of a patent lawsuit with Georg Luger who tried to steal the invention from Mauser while working for him. Mauser ultimately prevailed and retained protection of this key idea:



Next, a few class Mauser and DWM Lugers:



This is a boxed Mauser M1914 pocket pistol in .25acp complete with manual:



This is one of Mauser's early revolver inventions, the "Zig-Zag". A unique mechanism, it foreshadowed many of the unusual approaches Mauser took to creating new designs:



This barrel straightening machine (and operator) are in the museum where you can try out your hand at a unique skill:



On the left are marble statue busts of Wilhelm Mauser and Paul Mauser:



Paul Mauser is buried in Oberndorf in a beautiful cemetery situated along the Neckar river. We visited his grave:



... and that of Fidel Feederle, who is credited with the production of the design for the C-96 in Mauser's research office:



In Belgium, there is a very worthwhile military museum. It is old school, and concentrates on the uniforms worn by soldiers of Belgium as well as their equipment, vehicles and airplanes.



The galleries go back to the 1830's:



and consist of lots of weaponry, portraits, uniforms and equipment:



It's rather comprehensive, and included some surprises. Did you know that Belgium had a [military interest in Mexico in the 1860's](#)?



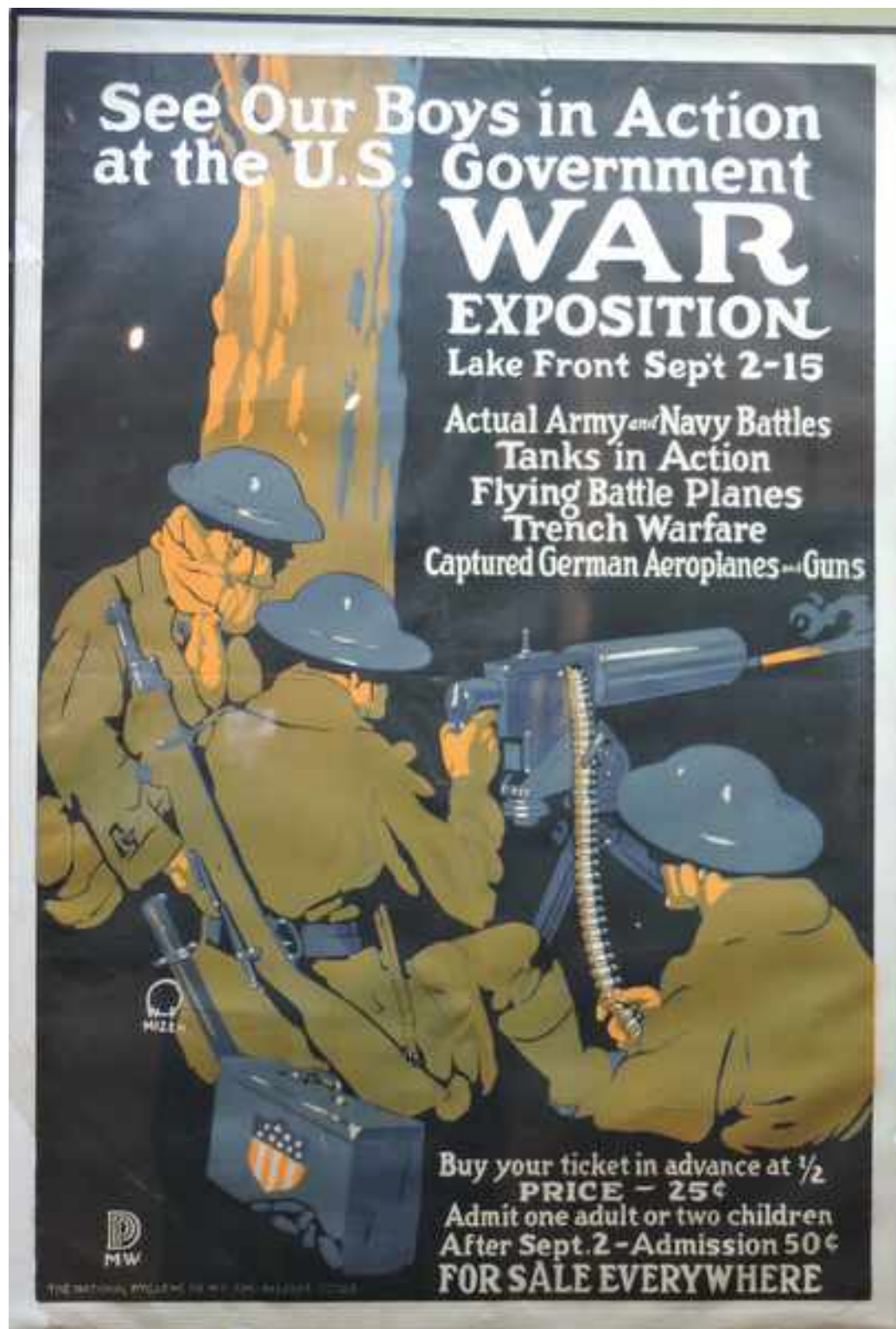
The areas of Liege and Herstal are centers for weapons production in Belgium. This beautiful cannon was made in Liege in 1852:



I concentrated on the WW-I and WW-II eras. First this field cannon:



There is a section on American participation in WW-I. Here's a fund raising poster:



And typical WW-I uniform and kit:



In a section on the Russians and their military under the Tsar, they had the uniforms of several of the Imperial Royal family, including the small one for [Alexei](#) (who, like his father [Tsar Nicholas II](#) and mother [Alexandra](#) didn't survive the 1917 revolution):



A few closeups of firearms include:

Lugers from WW-I



and an FN / Browning:



They also have one of the first tanks from WW-I - a massive behemoth that must have intimidated even the operators themselves:



Up above is a Fokker tri-wing fighter:



Here is a typical German medical officer and equipment:



There is a huge wing that includes aircraft of many eras, including everything up to modern jets:

First, a tri-motor Fokker:



DC-3 Dakota and typical airborne complement:



Radio operator and encoding (one time pad) books from the 1950's:



Typical WW-II nose art:



And a future pilot in training:



A few more firearms:

A FN Hi Power (P.35) made by FN in Belgium:



Mauser rifle action with stripper clip:



Colt 1903:



DWM M1900 Luger with silver inlaid dedication plate:



There are extensive displays on WW-II, including the German occupation and Allied invasions:

An example of German officer uniform:



One of several dioramas that depict operations during the war:



A 3 Rotor Enigma machine:



Captured V-1 Buzz Bomb, now thankfully a static display:



Interior of an Atlantic Wall bunker occupied by Germany troops prior to the Allied invasion:



British SOE (Special Operations) and the American OSS were active in Belgium working with the resistance and preparing for the Allied invasion:

Anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. Note the glass construction which must have been very difficult to detect:



SOE / OSS Typical Equipment:



A clandestine suitcase radio set:



Dynamite and the trigger for damaging rails and derailing trains:



Eisenhower's letter to the troops as they prepared to leave for the Normandy invasion:

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower