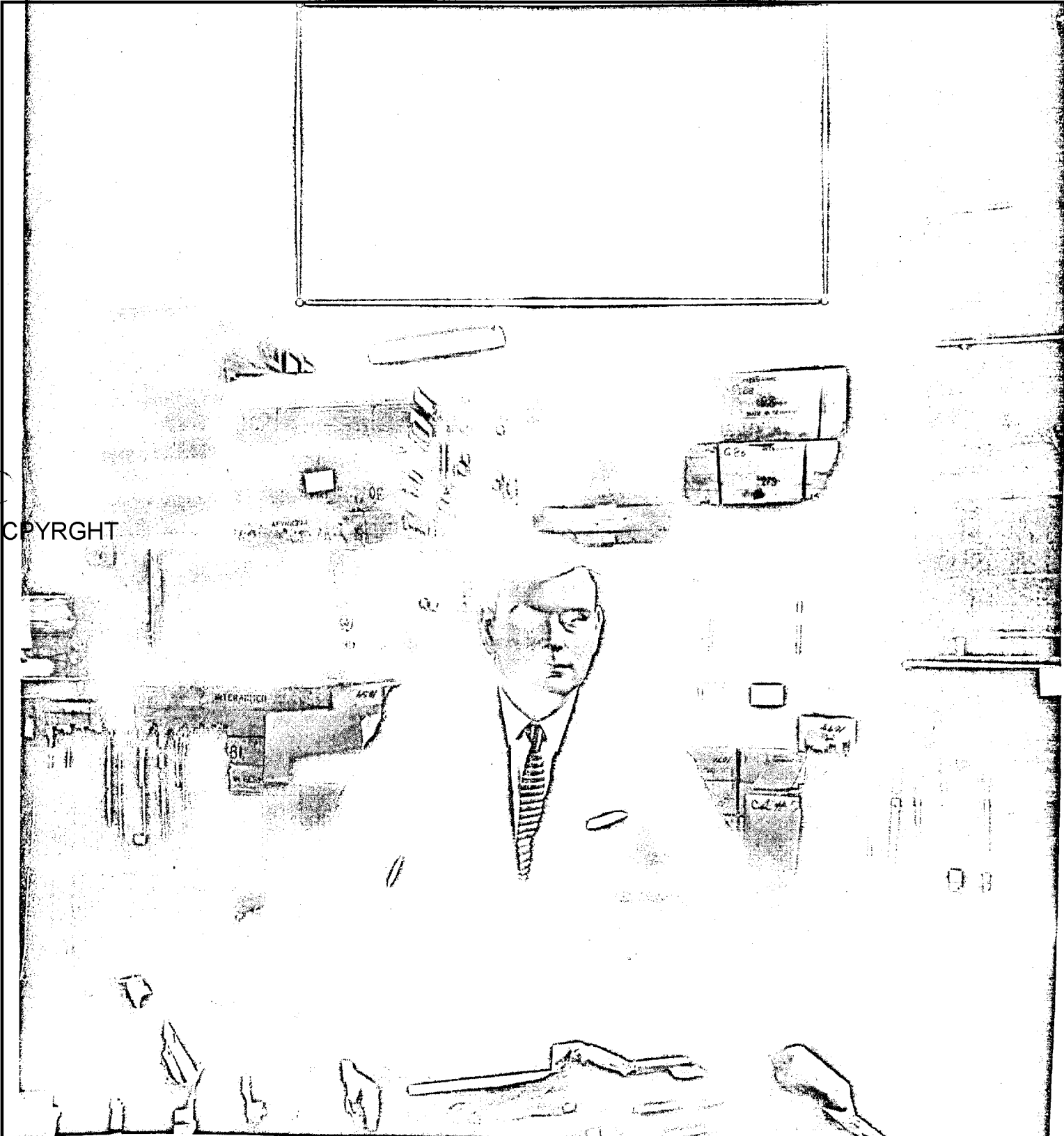


TRUES WHO//SAM CUMMINGS
CPYRGHT



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Cummings displays a collection of his weapons.
He once tried to demonstrate to neighbors that his stockpile was no hazard, but show stopped when a grenade "blew up."

BY JOHN BARRON AND MAX GUNTHER

ALEXANDRIA, VA.

■ Rafael Trujillo was in trouble. World opinion had turned against the dictator of the Dominican Republic; friends were deserting him; neighboring countries were growing hostile; rebellion was building up in his own country. The roof was falling in, and only one thing could help Trujillo: armed force.

But at the very time when he needed weapons most desperately, he was least able to get them. These were the late 1950's, and it was no longer fashionable to be friendly to Caribbean dictators. Foreign offices that had once helped him could now only shrug in sympathy. No nation wanted to go on record as helping Trujillo maintain his power.

But there were, after all, other sources of weapons than national governments. There were private weapons merchants, men with no political entanglements to embarrass them—men who would sell guns to anybody with cash.

Trujillo sent his agents out to scour the world. They made discreet inquiries in the murky limbo of the international arms trade. They came back to him with a report: There was only one private merchant big enough to sell weapons to Trujillo in the quantity he needed, an American named Sam Cummings.

Sam Cummings turned out to be most obliging and extremely efficient. Early in 1957, a freighter left Sweden for the United States. It transferred its cargo to another ship. The second ship slipped out of New York Harbor bound for the Dominican Republic. Rafael Trujillo was on hand personally to welcome the cargo: 26 British Vampire jet fighters.

Once again Sam Cummings had delivered. Once again he had lived up to his reputation as the world's biggest "merchant of death," an epithet his enemies try never to let him escape.

Not even his enemies, of whom there are many, will argue about his importance. Sam Cummings is only 35 and has barely been in business for a decade and a half, but he has built up a worldwide weapons-trading complex so vast that there are no real competitors in sight. Under the corporate chieftainship of his International Armament Corporation (Interarmco), he has warehouses and offices in the U.S. and at least 12 foreign countries, and a spiderweb of controls linking affiliates and agents in every restless corner of the globe. Hardly any weapons deal of importance is transacted anywhere outside the Iron Curtain that Cummings doesn't know about, if he doesn't actually have a hand in it. You hear his name anywhere and any time there is clandestine talk of arms—not at the world council tables under the glare of publicity, but in the quieter places. In dim

corners at embassy cocktail parties. In grimy bars at out-of-the-way ports. At secret jungle airstrips.

His main warehouse center is at Alexandria, Virginia, across the Potomac from the nation's capital. In this tremendous arsenal with its military atmosphere (the workmen wear fatigue uniforms that once belonged to Field Marshal Rommel's desert army), Sam Cummings claims to have more guns than the U.S. and British armies together now have in service, and more than most nations have even in reserve. "In Alexandria alone," says he, "we have enough guns to outfit whole Russian, German, Italian, British and American infantry divisions with their standard World War II equipment." He says it proudly. And not only does he have guns. He'll sell you almost any kind of killing equipment you're prepared to pay for. Tanks, trucks, torpedoes. Boats, bombs, bayonets, bazookas. He admits to only two things being out of his league: nuclear weapons and germ-war materials. But he won't admit they're out forever.

Sam Cummings, though he doesn't like to hear it said, has an outrageous amount of military power at his fingertips. By selling or withholding arms at certain strategic points in the giant chess game of world diplomacy, he could, if he chose, conceivably alter the balance of power in many localities, perhaps with worldwide repercussions. It doesn't take much weaponry to tip the scales one way or the other. During the fighting in the Congo's Katanga Province, two jet fighters crippled U.N. airborne supply operations and held the U.N. forces at bay for more than two weeks. Fidel Castro, fighting the guerrilla war that won him power in Cuba and created a grave problem for the entire hemisphere, probably had fewer weapons all told than you can find in a single Interarmco warehouse building.

There's no evidence that Cummings has ever set out deliberately to tip the scales in this way. His politics are those of a businessman: he offers his deadly merchandise to buyers who will give him a profit. But in doing so, he has undoubtedly helped shape the present alignments of the chess game. Many of his deals sound less like those of a private business than those of a government—and a rather wealthy government, at that. His sale of 26 fighter planes to Trujillo must have helped the dictator preserve his bloody regime a few years longer. In the same year as that transaction, Cummings sold several thousand U.S. surplus heavy machine guns to France. In 1962 he sold some 40,000 modern rifles to sundry buyers in Asia. He has equipped the Sudanese army with Armalite AR-10 rifles, forerunner of the

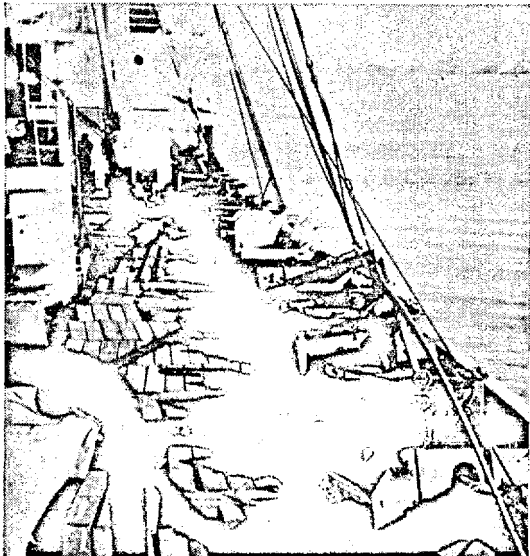
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An enigma meets a riddle. . . . Many found the character of Pandit Nehru unfathomable, but Cummings, here meeting the late Indian leader while weapon-scouting in Asia, is in his own way, equally a mystery, even to close associates.



On deck of this Finnish freighter is assorted artillery for Cummings. At least once in the arms merchant's career, crates like those shown have turned out to be more valuable than the arms packed inside them, being made of a rare wood.

AR-15 with which the U.S. Infantry is only now equipping itself.

His purchases have been equally big. In 1958 he made a deal with England to buy a fantastic total of more than half a million surplus rifles and automatic weapons. "We almost bought a battleship from Chile once," he adds. "The Japanese outbid us and towed it to Yokohama for scrap. Missiles? Well, some NATO countries have sounded us out about taking some of their Nikes that are getting old."

The spectacle of a private merchant in the big-time international arms trade, a single man dabbling in potential world disaster, understandably troubles the governments of the big Western powers. They feel uneasy about Sam Cummings. They watch him as you might watch a small boy lighting a fire in the fireplace: what he's doing is legal, but you know he could burn the house down if you don't stay on top of him every minute. They wonder how responsible a man can be who sells instruments of death for a profit, who sells to a dictator one day and a liberator the next, a recognized government here and a ragged army of fire-breathing rebels there. How far, they wonder, can such a man be trusted? If a powder-keg situation develops somewhere in which Cummings' activities are crucial, can he be controlled?

Cummings insists he's dangerous to nobody. "We do a multi-million-dollar business each year and intend to do a lot more," he pointed out earnestly to a TRUE reporter. "I'd be stupid to jeopardize it all by trying to pick up a few hundred thousand in clandestine deals." He says, for example, that he refused to sell arms to Castro's guerrillas. "They called us all the time and offered to send their trucks up to Alexandria and pay premium prices in cash. We just laughed at them."

Yet despite Cummings' earnest protestations, the U.S. government keeps so close an eye on him that he can hardly buy a squirt gun in this country without somebody's carefully noting it down. He has been investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit, which administers federal laws relating to domestic firearms sales. The Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI also watch him with great interest. But the shadow most constantly dogging his heels is the State Department's Office of Munitions Control, which regulates the movement of war equipment both into and out of the country.

According to OMC's Director, Merrill Hammond, this nervous agency scrutinizes every Interarmco deal with a microscope. "We contact our embassies and other people abroad, try to ascertain the true purpose of a shipment and what its consequences are likely to be. We also consult every branch of the government which might be able to help. Sometimes it takes as long as six months to complete an investigation." During the Cuban fighting before Castro took over, Hammond flew to Florida personally to check rumors that Cummings was sneaking arms into an already explosive situation.

Shrewd, scholarly Dr. Robert Margrave, OMC's Deputy Director, points out that every weapons shipment in or out of the U.S. must be specifically licensed by his agency. "The big outfits like Interarmco cooperate closely with us," he says. "They know what would happen if they got on our blacklist." Loss of U.S. license would hurt Cummings badly, at least until he got reorganized. He could still buy and sell in the rest of the world. The State Department can exert a partial and indirect control over some of his overseas activities by putting pressure on other governments, but it can't control him completely.

"So far as I personally know," says a former intelligence officer who probed Cummings' activities, "there's no record of his being involved in anything subversive or illegal. But when a guy's got that many guns and his kind of contacts, you've got to keep after him all the time."

Cummings, of course, doesn't particularly enjoy living in the

Remarks a colleague: "There are only three kinds of people Sam won't have anything to do with: drunks, crooks and intelligence personnel. They're all bad for business."

What breed of man is this? Passing him on the street, you'd take him for a former college football star comfortably settled in some big-company sinecure. He's a big man: 220 pounds, solid, athletic. His round, boyish face gives no hint that he worries about anything more pressing than his golf score. His voice, when he speaks, is deep and calm.

Such a man doesn't scare easily. "The entire weight of the U.S. government," says a rival munitions merchant, "won't keep him from selling arms wherever he damned well pleases." Nor do his competitors worry him—and there are many who are well worth worrying about. The international arms trade is a murky and nightmarish maze of intrigue. Fanatic political groups—notably the Communists, who run guns in a steady stream to such hot spots as Vietnam—pay scant attention to the fair-play rules of civilized business. Their hired assassins lurk in the world's alleyways, along with desperate freelance gun-runners to whom violence is a way of life. A Swiss gun merchant, Dr. Paul Stauffer, was shot down in his own driveway. An Algerian weapons buyer was killed on a busy street in Bonn, in broad daylight.

But Sam seems unconcerned. "If these characters give me trouble," says he, "I'll just have to lean on them." Coming from anybody else, this would seem like empty bravado. But when Cummings says it with his quickly evaporating smile, you tend to take him seriously. It might be a mistake, in fact, ever to take Sam Cummings in any other way but seriously.

Even when he's in a bantering mood you come away scratching your head, wondering how much of it he really meant. Sometimes he'll refer to some obscure area of the world and say: "Looks as if there's going to be a little war over there. That'll be good for me." He smiles. But you reflect that if there were no wars, there would be no Interarmco. The comparison may be inaccurate, but you can't help thinking of Basil Zaharoff, the notorious weapons tycoon whose intrigues early this century are said to have helped stir up World War I.

The one thing you can say for sure about Sam Cummings is that he knows guns. He was almost weaned on them. When he was five years old he got hold of an old Maxim '08 heavy machine gun discarded by an American Legion post in his native Philadelphia; and while most kids his age were playing with toy trains, he was learning to take his gun apart and reassemble it. By the time he was 12 he was an avid collector. As he moved into his teens he began to earn pocket money by buying and selling guns among other collectors.

After a routine postwar hitch in the Army he used the G.I. Bill to go to George Washington University and then to Oxford, where he intended to study history. But Oxford didn't suit him. To him, history learned in a classroom was like great music heard on a tinny phonograph. He wanted to get closer to history than that. After a few weeks he quit the university and set off on a tour of European battlefields.

On a gentle spring evening not long afterward, young Sam Cummings rambled along the deserted beaches of Normandy. Alone in the gathering dusk, he heard all around him what he had come to hear: the great, sad echoes of history. On this coast, four years before, Adolf Hitler's mighty Wehrmacht had met an army still mightier. Within a year of the epic battle fought here, the Nazi army and the Third Reich had perished.

As the streaky evening sky turned blood-red above him, Cummings found himself closer to history than even he, perhaps, had wanted. The year was 1948, and many of these battlefields had not yet been cleaned up. Many had been forgotten in the bewildering rush of new world events and world fears since the war's end. Young Sam Cummings found himself in history's very sanctum. German skeletons lay in the defensive positions where they had fallen in those bloody June days of 1944. Some still wore tattered shreds of the uniform that had terrorized Europe. They guarded acres of forsaken weapons, German and Allied. There were beached vessels and tanks, some with the crews still in them. There were rifles, mortars, ammunition, live grenades and rockets.

Standing in this weird graveyard of D-Day's titanic struggle, young Sam at first felt shocked and unhappy. But then the trader's fever began to rise in his blood. He wondered about this melancholy litter of weapons. To whom did they belong? They were, it seemed, anybody's who troubled to pick them up and carry them away.

In succeeding weeks he roamed through other great battlefields in Europe. He saw abandoned weapons everywhere. On the crumbling runways of a deserted airfield in Holland he saw Messerschmidt ME-262 jet fighters. In a huge bunker near Appeldoorn he found V-1 rockets exactly as the Germans had left them. He discovered a huge supply of German TABUN poison gas. Along roadsides and in fields he saw great piles of guns and other war equipment, left in the weather to rust and mold.

Somebody in the world must want these weapons, Sam thought. European governments apparently didn't. But there were newborn nations in Asia and Africa, nations with ambitions and fears. There were rebellious groups in South America. Death was in demand; the market was waiting to welcome anybody who had it to sell. And here was all Europe, one big dump heap of surplus death, waiting for a buyer.

Sam went home to America with his fantastic career taking form in his head. He had only \$8 in his pocket. That wasn't enough to found an arms business, so he marked time, nurturing his dream and keeping his eyes open. He went back to college on the remainder of his GI Bill benefits, graduated in 1949. He fidgeted around, eventually going to work for the CIA. This odd interlude in Cummings' life is a locked room. He can't or won't discuss it; neither can or will his CIA superiors. Evidently the period wasn't a happy one, for Cummings quit within a year. His break with the government seems to have been honorable, but not amicable. Cummings has never since been fond of intelligence people.

In 1950, Cummings finally got back on the track of his dream. A California munitions trading outfit, Western Arms, commissioned him as overseas buyer. It was exactly the kind of job he needed. As he bird-dogged weapons across Europe, Africa and Asia, he became aware as never before of the huge profits that are possible in the death business.

Other businesses are happy with a 5 percent or 10 percent return on invested capital. But in the arms business, 100 percent is expected and normal. Bill Edwards, the genial Chicagoan who knew Cummings back in those early days, tells of buying guns at \$2.50 and selling them at \$45. He remembers buying Winchester rifles at \$1.24, selling them at \$26, and later seeing them advertised at still greater markups.

Such incredible profits are made possible by the vast disparity that may exist from one man to another in desire for a certain weapon. A non-collector, finding a dusty old gun left in the attic by his grandfather, will file it in a trunk and forget it. But a gun nut, finding the same weapon, may turn bug-eyed with delight. Similarly, a nation that has been modernizing may sell its old killing equipment for little more than the price of scrap metal. But a less advanced nation may pay several times that price for the same equipment and deem it a bargain. The trader's trick is to find the right seller and buyer in the right moods.

Cummings did well for Western Arms. "My personal needs were limited," he recalls. "I lived off my expense account and banked all my commissions." In three years he banked almost \$25,000. Here, at last, was his starting capital—the seed which, if tended well, could grow into the arms business Sam envisioned. He fertilized it with daring and imagination, and up sprouted Interarmco.

One of his first big deals was a type of juggling act which his associates and enemies now refer to as a "typical Cummings coup." He got South American orders for rifles he didn't own, flew to Europe, bought the rifles partly on credit, shipped them to his customers, and fin-

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ished paying for the goods and customers handed him the cash.

"Sam has always done things that way," says Bill Edwards. (Edwards is no longer on friendly terms with Cummings. The two have had a falling-out over some incident or transaction which neither will discuss.) "He's big, but he has the knack of making his customers think he's even bigger. His advertising gives the impression that all the weapons offered are sitting in his warehouses. Actually, many aren't. What Sam really means is that he knows where to get these weapons for you, if you hand him an order."

With this impression of size piled on top of actual size, which was already considerable, Cummings in the mid-1950's was able to catch the ear of big finance in Europe. Continental bankers loaned him big sums for big new coups. With their money he began emptying entire warehouses of Garands, Enfields, Mausers and other fine weapons, some in their original factory crates. "I made some real buys," he says, happily. "Governments were eager to clear warehouse space of old war material they thought they didn't need."

Some governments later regretted their eagerness—the Dutch, for example. Sam was prospecting through a Dutch government depot one day in the early 1950's, looking mainly for some surplus ammunition that he'd heard might be lying about. The Dutch at the time were cordial to death merchants, but not particularly helpful. Confusion still lingered from the war and the years of rapid post-war readjustment. Nobody in the government's offices really knew what surplus munitions might be stored where. Traders had to hunt through the storage depots themselves.

As a colonel led Cummings through the depot, Sam suddenly found himself in a treasure trove. He was walking through rooms stacked high with rifles—and not just any rifles. These were a special series of Johnson semi-automatics, built in the U.S. for the Netherlands Indies forces in 1939. Cummings recognized them instantly; they were famous, known throughout the gun world for their craftsmanship and shooting qualities. Many traders since the war had wondered where they'd disappeared to. Thousands were thought to exist, but nobody had been able to get any clues. Bill Edwards had asked about them at the Dutch Embassy in Paris in 1948, but had been told: "There are none in existence."

Cummings blinked, swallowed, steadied his nerves and asked casually: "Can these be bought?"

The colonel looked mildly surprised. "Oh," he said, "would you be interested in something like this?"

Interested was hardly the word. Sam quickly made a deal. The Johnson rifles had cost the Dutch something like \$200 each, and the word in the trade is that Cummings got them for less than \$15.

As they began appearing on the U.S. market, other alert traders knew instantly that the lost gold mine had been discovered. Dutch officials were button-holed by hopeful traders and sent to further caches of Johnson rifles and other

One merchant in particular stumbled on a new gold-mine: an entire warehouse full of confiscated guns. There were about 100,000 of them—odd bits of everything imaginable, from 15th century weapons to the most modern light machine guns. Pop-eyed with delight, the merchant bought everything but the building for a reputed \$100,000.

"When the Dutch saw the prices being charged in the U.S. for all these weapons," recalls Bill Edwards gloomily, "they nearly had a hemorrhage." They recognized that they'd been taken to the cleaners on a heroic scale; they'd sold valuable property at scrap-metal prices. It's also suspected that the Dutch, only a little later, discovered that some of these same guns were drifting into the hands of troublesome elements in their own colonies. At any rate, Holland from then on wasn't a good place for weapons prospecting. The Netherlands government today prefers to burn surplus arms rather than sell to private traders.

When Bill Edwards called on the Dutch arms office three years ago he found one of the top officers, himself a gun fancier, almost weeping at his desk. "We just dumped gasoline over 2,000 fine little Browning pistols," the officer said, hoarsely. "Almost new, they were." Some 40,000 Enfield rifles had been destroyed, and 40,000 more were ticketed for the pyre later.

Most of Cummings' transactions have ended more amicably. He boasts that he's still welcome in almost all the countries where he has done business, buying or selling. He carefully maintains an air of being an ordinary businessman, a clean-cut, honest-to-the-last-dime young fellow who might be selling vacuum cleaners, but just happens to be selling death. He studiously shies away from the Basil Zaharoff image. "I know a lot of people think I'm a merchant of death who quaffs ancient Chinese potions and keeps a couple of mustachioed insurrectionists around as bodyguards," he sadly told a reporter. "They're wrong, though. I'm just a country boy trying to get along."

But while the same reporter was sitting in Cummings' office, the phone rang. Cummings' end of the conversation went like this: "Oh, making treacherous deals . . . just creeping, creeping around Europe . . . Well, you could buy up that beautiful, horrible stuff which came out of Vietnam . . . Sold out to those West Coast criminals, eh? Why don't you fly down here, or do the Feds still let you fly? Still have that 400-pound deputy sheriff chained to your wrist? . . ." One country boy to another.

As Cummings hunted buys throughout the world in the 1950's, he also hunted customers. He or his growing number of agents were always to be found in the world's nervous localities. He became, of necessity, a student of human and national nature, a kind of seer who could predict who would want what weapons when. As the West Germans began rearming, Cummings was moving around among the troops and

military bureaus with word of several thousand tons of surplus equipment which he'd stored at Alexandria. Bonn dispatched an inspector who arrived in Alexandria wearing, as Cummings recalls, "a black leather coat and a faraway look." Cummings showed him through a warehouse crammed with the Wehrmacht's deadly MG-42 machine guns, oiled and ready. With a nostalgic sigh, the German ordered a shipload.

The Alexandria depot, which had begun when Cummings bought an abandoned tavern stilted out over the Potomac River, by now was developing into the major industrial setup it is today: nine great warehouse buildings served by their own dock and rail facilities. As it grew, Alexandria's citizens began to get the shakes. Into their peaceful midst had been dumped all kinds of lethal weapons and live ammunition. A press dispatch saying that several thousand hand grenades were on the way finally touched off a full-fledged citizens' uprising. There were loud demands that Cummings and his arsenal get out of town.

Cummings assured everybody that these weren't live grenades, and he invited a committee of townsmen to visit the depot and see for themselves. The townsmen watched while eight Interarmco employees, nattily dressed in Afrika Korps uniforms, marched forth carrying grenades.

The first demonstrator pulled the pin from his grenade and held it up before his audience with a reassuring grin. But the grin withered from his face. Smoke was coming from the fuse. With a quavering cry he flung the grenade away and dived for the ground amid his seven colleagues. A fearful explosion rattled the surrounding windows. The committee of townsmen vanished up the street like a herd of startled antelopes.

It was simply a case of bad luck. The grenade happened to be one of a few in the shipment equipped with a loud noise-making charge for use in training troops. The joke was on Cummings, but this doesn't seem to have made Alexandria any happier. Last year the citizens, led by the mayor, once again tried to have Interarmco drummed out of town. Once again Cummings managed to talk them out of it, but restlessness among the natives continues.

The joke was on Cummings another time when an Ethiopian general, to whom Sam had made a very low offer for a warehouse full of guns, chased him out of the building with a spear. And another time, when he had a big shipment of Swedish Mauser M94 carbines on the way to Alexandria and was told by Treasury officials that the barrels were too short. Under U.S. law a weapon of that type must have a barrel at least 18 inches long; otherwise it's subject to a whopping tax. The Swedish carbines measured 17 7/8 inches. Interarmco had to fit the carbines with special blued steel tips to make them long enough, and then had to fire more than 10,000 rounds through them to prove the tips' strength.

By the time the joke turns out to have

Death is a profitable commodity. Cummings makes sure that the people he deals with, mostly young men like himself, are paid more than the top government officials they have to deal with. As for Sam, his personal income is enormous. Young Sam Cummings wears expensive dark suits, tailored in London. His personal gun collection is possibly the biggest in the world owned by any single man. He maintains apartments, complete with separate wardrobes, in Geneva, London, Salzburg and Copenhagen. His main home is an elegant apartment in Monaco, where he and his spectacularly beautiful Swiss wife (his second) are esteemed citizens. When Mrs. Cummings recently gave birth to twins, Princess Grace had a special medallion struck in honor of the infants, the first pair of twins born to Americans in Monaco.

Apart from enjoying this blue-blooded camaraderie, Sam likes Monaco's equally sociable tax laws, which mean a great deal to a man in his financial position. It is consistently rumored, though he just as steadfastly denies it, that he owns 80 percent of a bank in Switzerland—which, if it is true, would give this much-scrutinized man a refuge in the peculiarly privacy-loving Swiss commercial system.

Cummings uses his great wealth with remarkable modesty, perhaps to further a profitable twist. Like the time Sam bought a shipment of arms that were worth less than the boxes they came in. This was in 1962, when Cummings took an assortment of arms which the Sukarno government of Indonesia was desirous of unloading. The weapons turned out to be obsolete and not very valuable, but the boxes they were delivered in were another story. Made of teak and mahogany, in which the forests of Indonesia abound, they were magnificently carpentered, real collector's items. Sam is selling them one at a time, at collector's prices.

But Sam Cummings isn't the kind of man who lets jokes determine his fortunes. He plans for success—and gets it. Today his Interarmco is a multi-million-dollar business. While Sam and his minions are tight-lipped about actual figures, they'll allow that 1963 was the best year in Interarmco's history. Surprisingly, much of the year's income came not from foreign governments but from domestic sales to chain stores and small-weapons stores serving hunters and sportsmen.

the impression that he is not trying to be an international warlord. He doesn't act like a man of power—not in public. Except in apartments and clothes, he lives simply. He takes his high-placed clients to expensive restaurants, but his own tastes run to hamburgers. He's seldom to be found at a late-night party, preferring to go to bed early for the nine hours' sleep he considers necessary. He neither smokes nor drinks. "Sam doesn't need a cocktail," says OMC's Dr. Margrave. "He's intoxicated enough by his own thoughts."

One sniff of these thoughts would pickle any ordinary man. Massive as his enterprise is, wealthy as he is, powerful as he is, Sam Cummings by no means feels he's at the pinnacle of possibility. He's barely a 10th of the way up. He walks about the world these days nursing a magnificent ambition: he wants to control all the principal sources from which Western powers buy their small arms, and maybe larger weapons, too. He wants to control the whole weapons business.

Said he to a gasping reporter: "We intend to make investments that will lead either to ownership or control of key factories in our field throughout the world. We'll include related raw materials industries, if necessary. We have the distribution system well advanced. Now we are looking ahead to developing our production facilities in the fullest sense." He said it in a matter-of-fact way. He meant every word. "We want to own our weapons," he explained, "from the time they start in the mines, through the factories, through the 10th generation of sportsmen who buy them after the armies are finished with them."

"There's no doubt about it," says Interarmco vice-president Richard Winter, awestruck. "Sam is going to be the Krupp of his field." The Krupps would be flattered to hear their relatively modest operation compared to this soaring ambition.

Will Sam Cummings actually achieve it? If past performance is an indication, yes. Never in his life has he been known to abandon a major purpose. When he wants something, he gets it.

Back in his early prospecting days, whenever he was in London, he used to stop and look longingly into the window of Churchill's, Ltd., an august gun firm whose history antedates the Declaration of Independence. Displayed in that window were two guns that any collector would have mortgaged his soul to own: the last remaining pair of Ferguson breech-loading flintlock pistols made during the American Revolution. One day young Sam went in and asked what price Churchill's put on these jewels of weaponry. Churchill's coughed politely, barely managing to hide the amused smile that curled its lip, and told him the guns had no price.

In succeeding years, as fortune began to smile on him, Cummings returned to Churchill's whenever he was in London. Each time he raised his offer. Each time he was coolly rebuffed.

Two years ago he decided he'd fooled around long enough. He bought Churchill's.

—John Barron & Max Gunther

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