

Can a “dipped” pistol be “un-dipped”?

The question often comes up on what to look for when trying to determine if a P.38 pistol has been hot dip blued, as is the case with most Eastern Block imports. Some good indicators are:

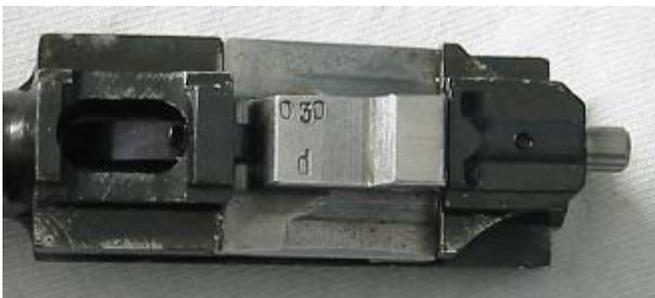
- A deep black finish, sometimes over pitting
- Safe and Fire indicators are no longer painted
- Various parts that should be “in-the-white” are now blued
- An overall exterior finish that is not commensurate with the mechanical wear of the pistol

However, if the pistol does not have the Russian capture mark or other non-standard markings (e.g. an import mark), it makes it much easier to remove the dip blue and pass the pistol off as a “GI bring back.”

The un-dipped pistol: Here’s a late-war zero series cyq. At first glance, it seems to be original. Painted safe and fire indicators, moderate high-point wear, and the standard cyq finish.



Disassembly reveals:



No problems here – the locking block and the locking block pin are in the white. Minor surface wear to bluing is apparent.

More finish wear where the locking block and slide contact the frame. Trigger and recoil springs are in the white. Everything looks normal so far.



Hammer strut spring (left) and sear (right) are not blued. At this point we can be fairly confident the pistol is not dipped...



But we'd better make sure. Let's compare it to another cyq:



At the top left is our suspect zero series. The bottom right is a late "f" block cyq.

There doesn't seem to be any major issues.

However...

Long-time P.38 collector and researcher Orvel Reichert provides several photos, which show that this pistol was most likely an Eastern Block captured firearm, and not a “GI bring back.”

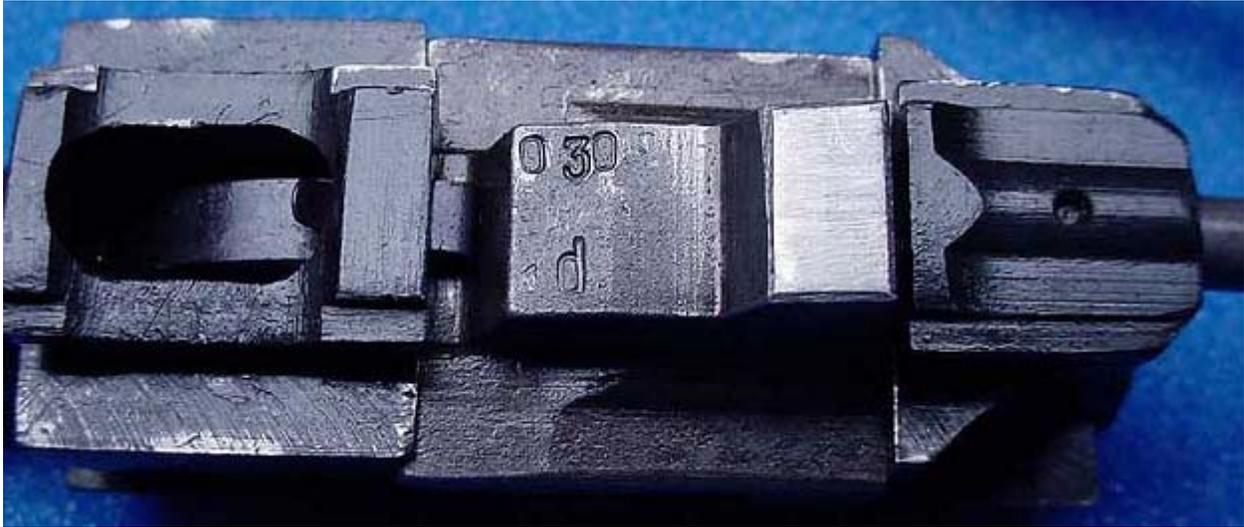


Photo courtesy of Orvel Reichert

This P.38 was most certainly dip-blued, and then disassembled and carefully cleaned to restore the original finish underneath. Whoever performed this operation knew which parts were originally blued and which weren't, and was able to do an admittedly good job in restoring the pistol back to its original state. It would be very difficult to detect this by a casual examination of the pistol, and harder still if the pistol were for sale online and only pictures were available.

