

## The Ü and Üb Marked Mauser Lugers

Ed Dittus

March, 2025

[Guns@Myakka.com](mailto:Guns@Myakka.com)

**"As the interest grows in the Luger field, more and stranger variations will be encountered"**

**Jones, p. 304.**

- I. Introduction
- II. A Ü Marked Mauser Luger
- III. The "Üb" marked Mauser Lugers
- IV. The "A" Marking
- V. The Pressure Test Examples
- VI. The Data Base
- VII. Interpretation of Numbering & Implied Dating
- VIII. The "LW" marking
- IX. The Ü and Üb Marks on other weapons
- X. Modern Examples
- XI. Summary
- Appendix I. Data Base
- Appendix II. References
- Appendix III. Acknowledgments

### I. Introduction to the literature

A small number of Lugers, all manufactured by Mauser and having a distinctive chamber mark, have surfaced over the years. The mark is either



a Ü or Üb. The literature suggests that such a mark stands for "Übungswaffe" or "Übung" both of which imply training or practice.

While references are slim, there is mention of this type of firearm in some of the standard Luger references, all virtually in passing and with little detail (Kenyon 1969, Still 1988, Davis 2006, Görtz 2010 & Hallock 2010). Görtz devotes the most space to them and repeats some commonly held wisdom to the effect that these pistols were used to sharpen the eye of Mauser pistol testers. He also states that the "exact reason for assembly of these pistols is unknown" (p. 1690).



Most sources that refer to these pistols, when describing the parts that made them up, use somewhat derogatory words: "Rough machined parts" (Kenyon, p. 300), "unfinished parts" (Still, p. 219), "less machined ... somewhat over sized" (Davis, p. 209), "rough ... unpolished" "rejected" (Görtz, pp. 453, 1689), Hallock (p.365) avers that these pistols were made up from "obsolete parts" and then used for the same training purpose.

Davis and Kenyon, both, seemingly, refer to the same pistol which has the Üb mark and is equipped with a tapped opening in the barrel to allow for pressure testing of cartridges. Two mentions, one gun.

Examination of information on the Internet mirrors the sparse findings in the literature. There is a common claim that these weapons were used for practice by testers but there is no evidence that this was actually so. The thinking seems to be that since it was in Mauser's interest to have trained pistol shots to demonstrate accuracy of Lugers coming from the assembly line AND since we have these pistols with no known purpose and an ambiguous marking (that might imply "testing"), it is convenient to assign

them the role of practice tools.

It is possible, it may even be likely, but there is no direct evidence to confirm this. And, in fact, it rather strains credulity to comprehend why practice with pistols made from "old, obsolete", "unfinished", "rough" (and so on) parts would advance Mauser's corporate objectives. I leave it to the reader to reflect on how "sharpening ones' eye" with a borderline relic pistol would lend skill when one subsequently performs for the record with a pristine, off the assembly line weapon.

And to add further confusion, let me note that the repeated claim that these are made from obsolete or unfinished or rejected parts should not be taken too seriously. I have three examples in my possession and have examined high quality photos of five others and my take on their condition is that it is all over the lot. All examples show wear, some are in very rough shape, most appear to be in decent, collectible condition. The photo shows the front of the frame for serials 1311, 1315 and 1316 side by side.



While we have no idea as to when the parts were manufactured, a close examination of the typefaces of the stamps suggests that they are likely contemporaneous. As can be seen, the finish is variable and not consistent.

I will describe some examples that I have had the opportunity to examine (as well as some presumed accessories) and will describe those examples for which we have photographs. At present, there are a total of 18 examples in our data base. More on them in due course.

## II. A Ü Marked Mauser Luger

The author was fortunate to have acquired a variation on the foregoing theme: a Mauser Luger that is a VOPO rework with a "Ü" (not "Üb") stamped on the chamber.

There is also the numeral "4" painted on the right tail of the frame.



There are no further markings on this weapon that are associated with the "Üb" pistols (to be described later). Further, being a rework, the weapon in question carries the full range of proofs and acceptance stamps that indicate Nazi acceptance consistent with its presumed date (the "G" mark indicates manufacture in 1935). The serial numbers match.



The other markings are consistent with a VOPO pistol, including the VOPO "Starburst" stamp.



So, what do we have here?

Seemingly, the weapon in question was manufactured in 1935, proofed and accepted by the military with the appropriate marks. Later in it's life it was reworked by/for the East German police (VOPO). Some parts were replaced and, perhaps, renumbered to match the frame. The VOPO mark was added to the left side of the slide, just ahead of the serial number.

At some point it was stamped with a Ü on the breech just forward of the G date mark. Was this done during it's service with the German military or after, under Communist rule? Was it part of some forgotten testing program? Unknown. Unlike the Üb Lugers, this one has some military marks.



What is known is that Lugers marked with the Üb mark were not proofed, nor were they accepted into military service. They might appear rough, almost taking on the appearance of "seconds". Not so with the weapon in hand. In fact, The bore appears bright and the rifling sharp. Though worn, there is nothing about this pistol that suggests that it is anything other than what it appears to be: a Luger Pistol that had a long service life. And,

while it has not been fired, the author has little doubt that it is perfectly serviceable. It might well have been reworked by the VOPO and pressed into service (or stored at an armory) without regard to the markings that have captured my interest. Or, perhaps, the mark was added by them.

This find was interesting in itself but what followed is what gives special character to this story.

A word of explanation: A Trommel Magazine is a drum magazine designed for use with the Luger P08 semi-automatic pistol, which was widely used by German forces. The Luger P08 typically used a 8-round box magazine in its standard configuration, but the Trommel Magazine could hold 32 rounds in a cylindrical, rotating drum. This increased the pistol's firepower, allowing for more ammunition



to be carried and fired without needing to reload as frequently. It was issued with the Artillery version of the Luger.

Shortly after the purchase of this pistol, the author came across a Trommel Magazine with a "Ü" inscription in white paint. And shortly after this, a correspondent contacted the author with information about yet another Trommel Magazine for sale that appeared to be sequentially

numbered to the one already purchased! The happenstance of two similarly marked objects appearing in close temporal proximity certainly is suggestive but no further information was forthcoming (one gets used to that phrase when one is plummeting down the Luger Rabbit Hole).



The inscription is repeated on the drum portion of the magazine on both examples. On one, the image is a "ghost" due to wear.

There is a tendency to associate these three objects, to link them as being part of some testing or related testing occupation at a factory or other facility, government or otherwise. The Ü and numeral, present in all of the objects in a similar style, executed with white paint in all cases, is evocative. It conjures up a row of Lugers with their associated Trommel Magazines lined up adjacent to an indoor range. A most basic question is the meaning of the Ü mark. It is possible that it might be a contraction of the Üb mark or that German technicians made a mistake. Three times. This explanation is not overly compelling.

### III. The "Üb" marked Mauser Lugers



This brings us to the "Üb" marked Lugers.

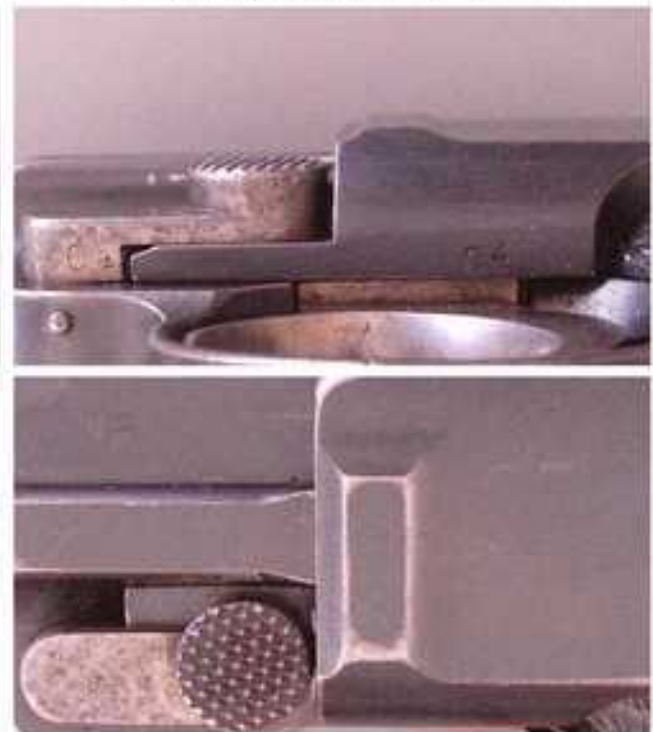
The picture shows the salient features of these pistols which I will now summarize.

The "Üb" mark appears on the chamber area. Sometimes with a date or date code (depending on the date of manufacture), sometimes without any additional marking. Note that in the photograph, there is a "G" date code in the lower example. The examples that have been reported generally do not have inspection or acceptance marks. Exceptions are sometimes found on the barrel where various acceptance marks can be seen. This supports the notion that these pistols were made up of parts opportunistically found in the plant.

Military (Exposed) Numbering



Civilian (Hidden) Numbering



Serial numbers are found in the military style as opposed to civilian, that is on the barrel, left side of the barrel extension, front of the frame and elsewhere.

Often the serials are a forced



match, that is that there are over-strikes present on parts that had been serialized previously. Again, this supports the notion that some of these pistols were assembled from parts found opportunistically.

I have been able to closely examine two pistols in this category. In both cases I would wager that the barrel had been replaced. The finish on the barrels is minty as are the bores. They don't "match" the wear on the rest of the gun. Is this assessment correct? If these are replacements was it due to the previous barrels being shot out? If that is the case, is that evidence for a testing role for these weapons?

#### **IV. The "A" Marking**

Some examples have an "A" stamped on the top of the barrel. The "A" mark, Görtz argues, is a long held German standard abbreviation for "Ausschuss", meaning scrap or reject. However it has also been claimed that the "A" stands for Anschuss or "Accuracy" (Hallock, p. 366). The presence of strong rifling in barrels marked with the "A" and barrels that are virtually shot out without the "A" mark render any absolute judgment about the significance of that mark questionable. The photo shows two barrels with the "A" mark that I suggested are new replacements and that have pristine bores. Another question.



The photo shows a close-up of the rifling in an "A" marked example. It is virtually mint. Some correspondents think that the mark is some sort of identification.

As a thought experiment consider the following. A large proportion of examples of Üb Lugers have that designation (the "Üb") impressed on the left grip. And under this is a capital "A".



An example is shown. If the "A" is some sort of designation for scrap why then is it on a grip for a perfectly serviceable firearm? And why would such a firearm be used for practice in order to meet accuracy objectives? I think that it is fair to suggest that the jury is still out regarding the meaning of that abbreviation.

## **V. The Pressure Test Examples**

In addition to the example cited by Kenyon and Davis (Serial 11908), Still (1988) refers to another example with a tapped hole in the barrel. He, unfortunately, does not provide the serial number for this specific gun but gives a list of serials that it is part of. This list does not include number 11908 so we may safely assume that there are at least two pistols with such a modification. It has been observed that the hole might have been a way to effectively destroy a scrap barrel. Two things militate against this hypothesis 1) a modest sized hole in a barrel does not really destroy it and 2) drilling and tapping are two relatively precision operations. Are we to believe that both were employed to produce scrap? I think that a tapped hole is fairly eloquent as to its purpose and that purpose is pressure testing.

**VI. The Data Base** (Appendix I) I have searched fairly carefully and have discovered a total of 17 or 18 examples. The serial numbers can be seen in the table. I say "17 or 18" because serial 11809/11908 might be the same pistol. See Kenyon, page 300. Given the paucity of examples, this might rightly be considered a rare Luger. The example with the Ü mark appears to be unique.

Serial 11809 is reported by Davis as having a presumed "Pressure Test" tapped hole. Kenyon reports such an example with SN 11908 on the frame and 11809 on the barrel and barrel extension. It appears that these two mentions refer to one gun. I have therefore chosen to use the frame SN which is 11908, ergo 11809 has been deleted.

There may be some rhyme and reason to the relationship between serial numbers, toggle stamps and chamber dates. A solution might be forthcoming from readers of this document. As of now, we only have speculation.

## VII. Interpretation of Numbering

While conventional wisdom dictates that these weapons were put together opportunistically with random parts, some of which were rejects or worn out, this conjecture is not supported by an examination of the available examples. Some appear to be quite serviceable firearms, with parts that are consistent in terms of wear, not at all what you would expect if they were "thrown together".

The serial numbers do not include any letter blocks. That is fine and good but it begs the question of how to interpret the large gaps between groups of serial numbers. There are a few cases in the hundreds range, a few in the thousands then a few in the ten thousands. Surely there were not that many Lugers used for testing. It seems as though the pistols were selected at intervals for some purpose

Please note the column named "Photos". If a cell is filled it means that I have associated photos. If you have access to missing photos, please contact me.

## VIII. The "LW" marking

There are two examples (#416, 18522) with such an engraving on the right side of the barrel extension or frame. The obvious interpretation is that this signifies "Luftwaffe" and refers to an inspection/acceptance. Does it though? Unclear. Why would a test Luger be allocated to the Luftwaffe? Another mystery. Or,



perhaps, these weapons were first issued to the Luftwaffe and then made their way back to Mauser to end their lives as Üb models. Or, perhaps, they were assembled and identified as Üb weapons and then provided to the Luftwaffe by Mauser for some nebulous purpose. Though, if the conjecture that Üb models were examples for practice of assembly/disassembly and basic handling, this last theory makes some sense.

### **IX. The Ü and Üb Marks on other weapons**

When one has a curious example of something, the natural response is to look for other examples. After a fair amount of searching on the Internet, and having posted this weapon on one specialty board, two weapons with a "Ü" mark have surfaced.

One other example of a period pistol with this marking has been discovered. It is a CZ that has an electro-pen engraving reported on the Luger Gunboards (see "CZ" in References for link).



There was also a Mauser K98k cutaway rifle which was stamped, in one place at least, with a "U" for sale at Pre98.com (see "Mauser Rifle" in References for link). This is, I believe, the same weapon described by

Görtz on page 453. He suggests that the U stands for "Unbrauchbar" or "reject" and that such stamping might be an informal ERMA practice.



Given that it is on a cutaway, it might as well stand for some word indicating training just as well.

The photo below shows a stamped machine gun top cover, a cover usually made by machining. In this case the inscription might be translated as "experimental".



The Ü Luger described remains unique.

### X. Modern Examples

One modern example of a Üb marked pistol has come to light on an HK forum (see "HK" for link in References).



From the take-down photos, it looks like an entirely functional weapon.

## XI. Summary

It seems that the use of the "Üb" and "Ü" markings might be interchangeable. While some distinction between the use to which weapons marked with these two designations might emerge, for all practical purposes they seem to be the same. It is a bit odd that given the degree to which weapons training is now and has always been a part of the military, that such marked objects are not more plentiful. Hopefully, readers will provide additional information about surviving examples and this might further elucidate their purpose.

**Üb and Ü Marks** The pistol with the Ü mark is unique as far as my research has shown. Is it simply a misprint, so to speak, a weapon where the machinist neglected to stamp the following "b"? Or is this something special? Unknown. No other examples on Lugers have come to the author's

attention despite diligent searching. There is evidence that the Ü mark, per se, is correct. Two snail drum magazines have been found with an identical marking (painted, though, rather than stamped). Why 32 round magazines? Practice? Unknown though it does seem likely.

The Üb mark is commonly assumed to stand for words meaning practice or training. There is a bit of a tautology with this choice of translation, it follows from the purported use of these pistols as tools for training marksmen. Practice or training could just as easily refer to the use of these pistols as bench examples to demonstrate the fit of parts or as trainers for employees to practice assembly of the weapons.

One other observation. There was a really striking cutaway Mauser Luger in pristine condition that was recently sold by Legacy Collectibles that had the Üb mark. The mark was clearly added after the cutaway was created (note the spacing). Here the abbreviation, whatever it is, clearly would refer to training that is not shooting related (see "Cutaway" in Internet References for link).



My net on these interesting arms is that we are seeing a bit of "If all you have is a hammer, all the world looks like a nail" going on. Mauser used employees to test pistols in the plant as part of the Army approval process. It was in the interest of the management of Mauser to have these employees be as skillful as humanly possible. To that end, they were given the opportunity to practice and they were incented to perform. That much is documented. Now we have at hand a small number of pistols whose

markings might support the contention that they were the objects used for the aforementioned practice. Might. One can only ask why, if such performance were so important, would Mauser management not provide the testers with the best possible equipment for their training? Barring some documentary evidence I suggest that we need to find an alternative use for these evocative objects.

## Appendix I Data

	7 Note	Side Serial	Frame Serial	Serial	Serial Over stamped?	Toggle	Chamber Date	Left Grip	Right Grip	Manufacturer	Barrel Mark	Proofs	Frame 1 is	Barrel Weight
1				37	No	? Hole cut thru	nd	Blank	Blank	Mausser	None	None	5	5
2				218	?	5/42	1939	?	?	Mausser	?	?		
3				308	?	5/42	1939	Blank	Blank	Mausser	A	None		
4				416	?	5/42	1938	Blank	Blank	Mausser	A	?		
5				1311	No	5	1939	Blank	Blank	Mausser	A	None	5	
6				1312	No	5/42	nd	Ub/A	?	Mausser	None	None	1	
7		1315	1315	1315	No	byf.	nd	Ub/A	Blank	Mausser	A	None		
8				1316	No	byf.	1936	Ub/A	Blank	Mausser	A	None	2	
9				1413	?	5/42	1917/20	?	?	Mausser	A	?		
10		1904	1904	1904	?	byf.	1939	Ub/A	Blank	Mausser	A	None		
11				1907	No	?	1939	Ub/A	?	Mausser	?	?		
12				1908	Yes	42	nd	Blank	Blank	Mausser	A	?		
13		1916	0218	1916	No	5/42	1939	Ub/A	Blank	Mausser	A	None		
14		4006	4006	4005	No	Blank	1935 (6 Data)	Blank	Blank	Mausser	None	None		
15				11908	?	5/42	nd	Blank	?	Mausser	None	None		
16				12202	?	5/42	?	?	?	?	?	?		
17				12210	?	5/42	?	?	?	?	?	?		
18				18522	No	5/42	1939	Ub/A	EW	Mausser	A	None		

## Appendix II

### References

- Datig, Fred A. *The Luger Pistol*. Borden Publishing Company, Los Angeles, California: 1962.
- Davis, Aarron. *Standard Catalog of Luger*. Gun Digest Books, 2006. p. 209.
- Görtz, Joachim and Sturgess, Geoffrey. *The Borchardt & Luger Automatic Pistols: A Technical History for Collectors from C93 to P. 08*. Brad Simpson Publishing, Galesburg, Illinois: 2010 and 2011. pp. 453, 1689 - 1690.
- Hallock, D. R. and van de Kant, J. *The Mauser Parabellum 1930-1946*. HaKa Arms Publishing Co., Port Orchard, WA: 2010. pp. 42, 365 - 366.
- Jones, H.E. *Luger Variations, Volume One*. Self Published, 1964.
- Kenyon Jr., Charles. *Lugers at Random*. Handgun Press, 1969. pp. 300 - 301.
- Still, Jan. *Third Reich Lugers. The Pistols of Germany and Her Allies in Two World Wars Volume III*. Self Published, Douglas, Alaska. 1988. pp. 219, 222.

### Internet References

**Cutaway:** <https://www.legacy-collectibles.com/rare%20factory%20cutaway%20training%20luger%20-%20ub%20marked.html>

**CZ:** <https://www.lugerforums.com/threads/ubung-cz27-with-holster.41792/>

**HK:** <https://www.hkpro.com/threads/p8-combat-training-pistol-p8-%C3%9Cb-9mm-fx-another-holy-grail-gun.544792/>

**Mauser Rifle:** <https://pre98.com/shop/tue-mar-16-rare-and-important-erma-erfurt-1937-mauser-k98k-cutaway-rifleall-matching-made-for-training-must-have-for-advanced-mauser-collectors/>

**This article originally appeared in three parts in Automag, the Journal of the National Automatic Pistol Collectors Association.**

Dittus, Ed (2020) **An Interesting Mauser Luger**. AutoMag, 53, 2, pp. 31-32

Dittus, Ed (2022) **The Üb and Ü Marked Luger Pistols**. AutoMag, 55, 1, pp. 12-15

Dittus, Ed (2022) **Additional Thoughts on the Üb and Ü Marked Luger Pistols**. AutoMag, 55, 2, pp. 41-44

## **Appendix III**

### **Thanks**

Thanks to P. J. Heck of Ohio for the interesting picture of the machine gun cover with the Üb mark.