

Die Pistole 08

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The Reich's Defense supplier for Infantry weapons, Simson & Co., in Suhl, has during the 10-year contract; numbered all 08 pistols, regardless in what year they were manufactured. The customer seemed to be satisfied, that the weapons individually were given serial numbers, in order to distinguish them from each other.

It was similar with the Mauser manufacturing. From 1934 on, the change of years had no part in it. The pistols were numbered in blocks of 10,000, till the "z"-block was filled. Then the cycle started again with the next, first 10,000 blocks without a serial number (code letter, suffix). With this method three times all the letters of the alphabet were used up by 1942, so were the ones of the fourth alphabet till the "n". The "j" never was used. Therefore the starting block is four times without letters. Pistols for the police, for the general trade and for the export came usually from blocks with the last letters of the alphabet, like from "v" to "z". So, the Armed Forces did not care about the complete sequences of numbers, they only cared about the number of pieces, no matter how they were numbered.

The "RC"- Stempel (seal)

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The abbreviation "RC" means "Revisions Commission". It belongs into the time of 1918 and it was already being considered old in WWI. This is in regards to the writing and the meaning of it. In simple words, in every Royal gun factory existed an "inner circle", consisting of the Director of Administration and the Superior of all the Inspectors and the Weapons Reviser. These gentlemen were the local "Revisions Commission". The Acceptance Gauge and the Master Gauge were marked with their seal. These gentlemen also had the right, to lay out the quality norm for the regulations of acceptance analogously not in compliance with the letters. It is explained in the regulations for the acceptance of pistols (like before regarding the Gun 98):

If there are doubts about the acceptance or rejection of a piece, like overstepping the allowed measurement limit by judging too insignificantly, in order to create a drawback for the duration of the piece or for the incorporation with other parts in composite weapons, then this piece must be presented to the Weapons Head Reviser. If acceptance was permitted by the Director of Administration, the part had to receive, besides the seal of the Official, the seal "RC". That was, to protect the Official from any later responsibility.

Example: During rounding the mouth of a pistol, the length was accidentally shortened below the allowed measurement of 99.7mm. The in charge Weapons Inspector should reject the barrel. He should stamp it with "A" (Ausschuss) for reject and give it to being scrapped. That would be uneconomical (the production already had cost money) and irrational (because the pistol 08 still can shoot and hit with a 99.6mm barrel). He presents the barrel and other deficiency samples to his Head Reviser. The Reviser meets with the Director of Administration. They permit the Inspector, to let the barrel pass. That means to stamp it with the acceptance seal. But, that nobody later can say the Inspector had done a sloppy job, or was bribed by his Master in the barrel manufacturing department, the "RC"-seal must be stamped in. That then protected the Inspector for the future.

On pistols 08 one seldom will see the "RC"-seal, that means the one from the Gun Factory Spandau. That finds its explanation in the contract with DWM: Pieces, which were not accurate to the gauge, automatically, were rejected. The manufacturer had to replace them with flawless new pieces. The manufacturer then sold his rejects to weapon dealers or to obligated self supplying officers and officials of the Army..... This elegant way out was closed to the Governmental Factories.

Simson & Co., Suhl in Thuringia

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According to Article 168 of the Versailles Peace Treaty, War Weapons, Ammunitions and War Divices could only be manufactured in enterprises licensed by the Victorious Powers. The German Reich's Government proposed a list of companies for the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission (Interalliierte Militär- Kontrollkommission "IMKK"), to chose from. From today's point of view, it is not understandable, why the German side criticized the selection of companies, aside from the unbearable intervention into the Government's Sovereignty. It is about the following licensed companies. For example:

Friedrich Krupp A.G., for guns over 17cm caliber

Rheinmetall, Düsseldorf-Derendorf, for guns up to 17cm caliber

Wyersberg-Kirschbaum & Co., Solingen, for stab weapons

Polte, Patronenfabrik Magdeburg, for infantry ammunition and grenade shellcases

WASAG, Reinsdorf, for nitro powder

Telefunken, Berlin, for Funkapparats

Carl Zeiss, Jena, for optical divices and searchlights.

The exclusive permission to manufacture guns, carbines, pistols, machine pistols, machine guns visor apparatus and laying mechanisms went to the Firma Simson & Co. in Suhl for their company in Suhl-Heinrichs.

The Reich's Government tried to drag out the execution of the diverted regulation from Article 168 (the close downs of all other companies) very much. Because of an ultimate thread of reprisals by the Allies on May 5, 1921, they found themselves forced to accept the selection of the IMKK in July of 1921. The list of the selected companies was published in the Reich's – and Prussian Gazette in July of 1921.

Historians in the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) at that time sensed a Jewish – Capitalistic Military erotic conspiracy. In the middle of the 1960s they spread the following theory through their writings: The IMKK Chairman, the French General Charles Nollet (from 1924 French Secretary of War), was married to one of the Simson's daughters. Which one, remained in the dark. The thruth was, that Nollet on February 14th, 1901, married Madeleine Vignon in Nizza. He never got a divorce from her. The NAZIS,

taking into consideration how strongly they hated the Simsons, never even mentioned the so-called "Liaison". It is perhaps just a product of fantasy. In 1987, David R. Ginsburg, an American lawyer, who was very knowledgeable regarding weapons, asked the Simson's nephew, Dr. Ewald Mayer (born 1908 in Plauen i. V., emigrated in 1936) about that matter. Accordingly to him, other companies did not show an interest to work for the German Defense Department. The Defense Department only could buy for very small amounts, but demanded the highest quality and the absolute readiness for production increase in case of a crisis. The Simsons decided, without any enthusiasm, but considering the gain of prestige and the financial subvention offer, for the partnership.

The Simsons had, because of WWI, great experiences in the gun manufacturing. Originally they were well known for their fine Hunting Gun manufacturing. In 1915 the company received the order to manufacture Guns 98. The installation took almost one year, because of the shortage of tool machines. From June 1916 on, 250 Guns 98 were delivered on daily bases. These are the daily productions (Guns 98) of other companies:

Gewehrfabrik Spandau	1440
Gewehrfabrik Danzig	1300
Gewehrfabrik Amberg	675
Gewehrfabrik Erfurt	275
Munitionsfabrik Dresden	75
Deutsche Waffen- und Munitionsfabriken Berlin	1350
Waffenfabrik Mauser	1125
Suhler Konsortium	638
Waffenwerke Oberspree (a DWM subsidiary)	150

(BA – MA, Msg 2/775)

The contract of Terms of Delivery, Volume, Warranties –and very important- the Establishment of the company in Heinrichs to the satisfaction of the Reich's Defense, was signed on May 25th, 1925. The contract was retroactive to April 1, 1924 (financial year 1924/25). The term was for the following 10 years until March 1934, unless it was agreed on new regulations one year before. On October 20th, 1928 it came to a change of "other arrangements". It was agreed on the Extension of the Contract for five more years, until March 31, 1939.

Back to the year 1925. Simson & Co. took over a big part of the divices, tools, production gauges and drawings for the Pistol 08 from the inventory of the former Kugelgewehrfabrik Erfurt free of cost. This must have been done before the formal signing of the contract. For the installation of the pistol fabrication, RM 821,000 from the Government had to be used. That seemed to the Weapons Office in the Reich's Defense Department very much money for pistols, which are not so magnificent as weapons for the war.

In 1927 it was considered, to abolish the Pistol 08 and replace it with a less expensive pistol, caliber 7.65 Browning with a mass locking.

Basically one would have liked to waiver the selfloading pistol and replace it with the Machine Pistol 18,1 (or "I"?) or a similar model. But that was not possible, because of the rules and regulations of the Versailles Peace Contract. Only Police Officers were allowed, to carry machine pistols.

During the dispute over the "Pistol – Questions" in 1927 finally the Argumentation of the Department for Testing (Prüfwesen) in the Weapons Office succeeded. If it is going to be a selfloading pistol, then it has to be a big caliber with a strong stopping power. At least 9mm parabellum or more. The same was demanded by the Royal Prussian Gun – Exams Commission (Königliche Preussische Gewehr – Prüfungskommission) at the beginning of the century. The experience of WWI confirmed those demands. But the thick caliber inevitably resulted in a construction with a bolted stopper, like the Pistol 08 had. There was nothing better or more new in 1927. So, they remained with that model for a while. This model has proven very good during the war.

The Reich's Defense Contract with Simson & Co.

The here repeated, strongly shortened, formulation was based on a copy of the contract. Dr.jur. (Attorney) Mayer, who was Management Assistant of the company from 1931 - 1933, took this copy along, when he emigrated in 1936 over Tschechoslovakia to the U.S.A. Paragraphs, which were not relevant for the weapons manufacturing, have been skipped.

Contract

between the Reich's Defense Department, short name "RWM" and the Open Business Corporation Simson & Co. in Suhl, short name "Firm", the following contract was closed.

Paragraph 1

The Firm is licensed by the Allied States under Number 163 in the Reich's Gazette of July 15th, 1921, for the manufacturing of the following: Guns, Carbines, Pistols, Machine Guns, Machine Pistols, Equipments for Heavy Guns and Mine-Throwers (as far as they do not constructively belong to the weapon) and Accessories.

The RMW obliges itself, in accordance to the means of availability and demands of the Firm, from 4/1/1924 for at least 10 years to 3/31/1934 to order interminable:

1. The number of objects allowed by the Allied States under 7011/A from 10.11.1921.
2. The Hand Weapons, Machine Guns, Machine Pistols and Aiming Mechanism Devices and Replacement Parts. The RWM is at liberty of doing the following: In case there are too few parts for manufacturing, those needed parts will be manufactured by the Army's- and the Marine's Weapons Armories and Weapons Work Shops.
2. The not in 2) mentioned Army Enterprises executing remodeling and improvements of the devices.

The RWM reserves the right, that normal machine parts, like screws, nuts, bolts a.s.o. can be manufactured in their own workshops or being purchased commercially.

Also such parts, like Leather, Textiles, Replacement Parts made of Wood, etc., are not included in the contract.

The Firm commits itself for the same time and not terminal to use their enterprise, as far as it is ready, for the manufacturing of Army Orders. The ordered amount of pieces must be manufactured and delivered everytime to prices and delivery terms agreed on. The respective delivery will be subject of a special contract.

After the 10 years the contract automatically is prolonged everytime for one more year, if there are no other arrangements being made 1 year ahead of time.

Paragraph 2

The factory equipments needed are not available in this Firm. The Firm explains, that they believe, not to be capable to do the manufacturing and is not willing to take a risk by taking on these productions. Therefore the Firm only agrees to the contract depending on being granted a non-interest financial help for as much as much as the first installation costs. The RWM consents to, depending on the provisions of the Law Corporations. The purpose of this financial help is to make sure; the production can handle number 1 mentioned capacity.

If there should be doubts arising in using this financial help, that means doubts which can not be cleared through the existing contract, then it shall be agreed on, that the Firm can not gain unjustified, from the financial help. Other than this, the Regulations and Layouts of this contract can not lead to a cheap harshness against the Firm.

Paragraph 3

The Firm obliges, to use this amount of money exclusively to supply the new equipment. The money spending needs to be recorded in such a way, that the RMW can examine thoroughly without a problem. These new equipments are subject to approvals by the Inter Allied Military-Control-Commission. In order to control those expenses, the Firm

allows the representative of the RWM to examine the equipments and their entire Accounting System, including receipts for the purchases.

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Paragraph 4

The Firm obliges to charge fair prices for the ordered weapons. If the market is strong, good prices will be agreed on in the contract. If there is a fluctuating market, or there are items needing a longer production time (of course in this case the Firm cannot come up with a fixed price), then "sliding prices".....

Paragraph 5

The amount needed for the first Installation, accordingly to a Manufacturing- and Installation plan, was estimated for 8.5 million Goldmark. The RMW obliges itself, subject to the availability of the funds by the Legislative Corporate Entities, if necessary to support the Firm until to the payment. If it can be proven, that additional requirements are needed, subsequent payment from the Legislative Corporate Entities will be applied for. The payment of the financial help will be given as an advance and in installments, parallel to the approval for the respective partial projects.

To make it possible for the Firm to start the new setup immediately and to support strongly, specified partial payments are already made available.

The improvement of the set up must start immediately and must be completed as quickly as possible. That means as far as no delays, due to objections by the IMKK or other not represented circumstances by the Firm, occur.

Paragraph 6

The contributions shall be used for:

- a) the provision or self-manufacturing of special Processing Machines. These are Tool Machines that are especially constructed for the manufacturing of parts layed out in the contract. Further for Tools, Fixtures, Gauges, Measuring Devices, Standby Equipments, which are constructed for the manufacturing of the designated Apparatus. Also for General Expenditure to start the Weapon Manufacturing. Among those are transpositions and installations of machines and the setup of Machine Foundations, as far as they are necessary to the Weapon Manufacturing. Among those are expenses, which are necessary and justified by the RWM or on order by the IMKK.
- b) the provisions of General Machines, Turbines and Transmissions as well as Electrical Machines and their setups. Also other necessary Machine setups for the manufacturing of specific Weapons. That means, as far as those machines are not at hand and at the time of the estimate by the RMW are acknowledged as

necessary for the Weapon Manufacturing. The proof for the necessity is valid, when the bulk of the supplies of machines and setups remains within the from both sides agreed on arrangements, which will be added to that contract.

- c) expenses, caused by constructional Expansions and constructional Restorations. Regarding the necessity of constructional expansions, extensions and constructional restorations the RWM decides.
- d) the Replacement of Buildings, in case the Firm is forced to build. That means, if there is no more space for the manufacturing of the Firm's other products, because the buildings and premises are used for the weapons production.

Paragraphs 7, 8, 9 10

No data

Paragraph 11

The RMW, will make it a point, to distribute the orders in a way, that there will be a most possible, even, occupation for the employees. The RWM carries full Responsibility for all the Damages resulting from the Weapons Production for the Armed Forces, unless a third party is responsible. For example, rebellion, plunder, results of political and subversive measurements, interference of foreign powers. But not fire, usual theft, water and lightning. Since the manufactured products for the Army created a big Risk for the Warehousing and Transportation, it is agreed on, that the RWM carries the danger from the point of time of the technical acceptance.....

The Obligation to give an Insight into this enterprise and to supply Information about it, also in regards to the examination and acceptance, there are Limitations to the right of entering the work rooms of the Army's Device Manufacturing and the information about questions. Questions that concern the continuation of the manufacturing and its security, regarding the prescribed quality. With other words, no manufacturing secrets can leak.

Paragraph 12

No data

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Paragraph 13

In case the Firm, by it's own fault and inspite of an appropriate extension of time, repeatedly does not deliver as agreed, the following will take place. Unless the damage

resulting from it (it would bring the readiness of the Armed Forces in question), is not taken care by the Firm in an appropriate time, the RWM has the right to cancel the contract.

Paragraph 14

No data

Paragraph 15

The RWM has the right, to recruit Weapons Master-Apprentices for a longer period of time. The terms and the hiring and occupation of that personnel are subject to special agreements.

Paragraph 16, 17, 18

No data

5/25/1925

Let's go on with the Simson Co., There are no existing Documents or Governmental Archives about the pistol manufacturing. From the serial numbers and external marks American Special Collectors have diagnosed three basic variants of the Simson 08.

Pistols with the year engraved on the shell:

These are the proven numbers: 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1928. The serial numbers evidently started with "1" and went to "700" or "800". The trademark Simson & Co. Suhl is usually imprinted on the front piece of the toggle joint.

Pistols without the year imprinted:

Their serial numbers overlap seemingly with the dated ones, beginning at approximately "100" and can be proven till approximately "1700". The trademark Simson & Co. Suhl, is on the front piece of the toggle joint.

Pistols without the year imprinted and without a clear text trade mark:

The sign "S" replaces this mark, like it is engraved in the Firm's trade mark. Low serial numbers are overlapping with the first two variants, ending at approximately "1900".

The approximately guessed total of all by Simson manufactured Pistols 08 is about 12,000 within 10 years, that is in accordance to a monthly production at Mauser.

Receivers were the Reich's Defense with a few samples and the Prussian Police.
Commercial deliveries are not known and would have been illegal.

In addition to the new production, the firm worked on refurbishing and repairing the pistols 08, remaining from the war-production 4/19/1918, for the Government. To judge by evidence, weapon parts of the old inventory (Gwf. Erfurt) were used for the newly manufactured, respectively the new mounted pieces.

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Already in 1927 a hate campaign against the Jewish owners of this company, was started by the Nazi-Press. The acquisitions of unjustified enrichment, unfair competition and fraud were partially absurd, partially there was a corn of truth, what was welcomed by the believing readers. It was argued, that a Carbine 98b from Simson, was with RM 200.00 over three times more expensive than a Rifle 98 at the Emperor's time (RM 52.00 – 65.00). This was seen as fraud regarding the taxpayers. Fraud on the readers was the silence about the truth, that 250 guns daily could be produced to more favorable prices, than a few for the small demand for the Reich' Defense. Further the Reich's Defense subventioned a Pro-Forma-Production, so that the Defense Industry and their workers could survive till the point of an unregimented armament. On Hitler's order in 1933 the Reich's Audit Office had to audit the distributions of the Reich's Defense Department and the price structures of the Simson & Co., as well as other licensed enterprises. Among those were "clean Arien", like Krupp, Rheinmetall, BMW Eisenach, GELAP (Siemens & Halske), Polte, WASAG and others. This action was a fall into the water. The Audit Office could find out, that all firms made more money on the Armament Orders than on deliveries to the civilian market. With 17.7% profit, Simson & Co. still was on the low side. Krupp also showed 17,7%, BMW between 10,7 and 26% and GELAP with their head phones 66,6%.

But that helped the Simsons little. By the end of 1933/34 their enterprise was forced into a Limited Partnership (Synchronization). In spite of owning the majority, they had nothing more to say. The new name was "Berlin Suhler Weapon- and Automobile Factories Simson & Co. (BSW).

The Party comrade, Dr. Herbert Hoffman, Berlin "From the Reich's Rank of the German Industry" received the position of trustee. The management in Suhl was taken over by Director Karl Beckurts from Mersburg. It was the most difficult task for them, to handle all the legal matters of the General Punishment, Civil- and Management Rights, they were forced to use. (Like a participant on the side of the Nazi stated in 1944). In spite of all this the NSDAP District Leader of Thuringia, Fritz Sauckel, and his mind mates succeeded in 1935/36 to disown the company owners de facto. (Arrangement" of November 23rd to 28th, 1935) To not being further prosecuted, the Simsons removed themselves by fleeing to Switzerland and later to the U.S.A.

The Army Weapons Office, represented by Colonel i.G. von Hanneken, completely conformed with the Nazi Party. Without his consent it would not have been possible, to dissolve the still valid contract (ending March 31st, 1939) and from 1934 on, give orders for pistols entirely to the Weapons Factory Mauser. (Nobody anymore wasted a thought on Article 168 of the Versailles Contract). The factory's devices (basically coming from Gwf. Erfurt), that were necessary for the production of the Pistol 08, went obviously to the Suhler Waffenfabrik Heinrich Krieghoff. No details are documented.

Some more to the Simson & Co.: In 1936 the enterprise was merged with the "Wilhelm Gustloff Stiftung (Foundation)" which was a NAZI Party Group. The foundation was named after their Country Group Leader, who was murdered in Switzerland in 1936. After WW2 the Russians did not return the company to their rightful owners, living in the USA. They confiscated it as a NAZI Property. As "Soviet Joint Stock Company AWO" the company was allowed, to further produce armament products. Once turned over to the "DDR" (Deutsche Demokratische Republik), the company ended as "Volkseigener Betrieb" (Publicly owned enterprise) under the roof of the "Ernst-Thälmann-Kombinats" (Combined Collectives). It was named after the in 1945-murdered KPD-Chairman.

How history can repeat itself!!

Pictures

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RC-Seal above the inspection's stamp in the position "3" "Pistol hardness" Evidently, the in charge Acceptance Official, discovered a flaw in the hardness of the weapon, that he reported to his Superior. Since the flaw did not influence the capacity of the pistol, the Official was allowed to pass the piece. He engraved his stamp on the piece. When this action was completed, the "Revision Commission" seal was applied.

(Pistole 08, Erfurt 1917, Nr. 4727/i.)

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- 1 Company sign on an undated Simson-08, number 8173
Acceptance Stamp "Adler/6".
- 2 Reich's Defense Acceptance Seal and fire eagle on the Simson-08, number 8173
(without the year). Triple Acceptance stamps (here two times "Adler/6" and one
time "Adler/33"), as it was demanded in regulations during the "Emporer's
Times" (Kaiserzeiten).

Article 168

The production of weapons, ammunition and defense devices of all kinds can only be done in workshops in factories, that have been approved by the Allies- and Associated Governments. These Governments reserved the right, to limit the numbers of workshops and factories.

Within 3 months after this present contract comes into effect, all other facilities, that serve the manufacturing and storage of weapons and ammunition and war devices of all kinds, or the manufacturing of special designs, will be closed. That includes the "Zeughäuser", but the ones, that will be needed for the storage of authorized ammunition. At the same time, all personel of the "Zeughäuser" will be dismissed.

3 Picture Article 168

Article 168 of the Peace Treaty of Versailles 1919 formulated the restriction for the German Armament Industry. The Expression "Zeughäuser" comes from the French language "Arsenaux" and the English language "Arsenals". This was in reference to the Royal Gun-, Powder- and Ammunition Factories.

- 1 The Simson trademark number 226 988, requested on 11-29-1917, approved on 10-23-1918, with the typical Simson "S"
- 2 With the Simson & Co. vehicle production, the Simson & Co. created after WWI another standing legacy. Here, the "Simson-Supra" from 1927. A car for the upper middle class. It also was sold to the Reich's Defense Department, the Reich's Marine, Bavarian and Saxonian Formations and to offices of the Protection Police.
- 3 The Prussian State's Gazette
Proclamation of article 168 regarding the Simson & Co.
Extraction of the Reich's and Prussians States Gazette July 15th, 1921. It is about the companies, that were granted the manufacturing of Infantry Weapons and Ammunition. In order to make it easier for IMKK to oversee, the permission was given only for an exactly defined place of production. There was no mentioning of scrap-parts. That helped the BKIW Company, to start a scrap parts business.
- 4 Factory grounds of the Simson & Co. around 1930.
(Foto: Archive Axel Pantermühl, Desau)
- 5 Suhl
From the German Reich's Address Book for Industry, Trade, Commerce and Agriculture, 30st Edition, Berlin 1932.