

# The Luger Journal

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## BULGARIAN LUGERS

Of the contract Lugers perhaps the least is known of the Bulgarians. Many Luger collectors have only limited knowledge of these pieces and some Luger collectors are aware of only the 1908 variation. In order to appreciate these pieces more fully some background information is needed.

Bulgaria is located in the eastern Balkan Peninsula along the Black Sea. To the north is Romania. The country is mostly agricultural and over 80% of the people live on small farms.

In the 7th century Bulgaria was invaded by the Bulgars a Turkic tribe from central Asia. By 810 the Bulgars had conquered Sofia from the Byzantines and had advanced to Constantinople. Boris 1 introduced Christianity in 865 and under his son Simeon there followed a great Bulgarian expansion. The greatest power of Bulgaria was reached under Ivan 11 who in the 12th century ruled over the entire Balkan Peninsula excluding only Greece. In 1330 Bulgaria fell to the Ottoman Empire and it remained a Turkish province until 1878.

Under Russian influence Bulgaria achieved some measure of independence in the latter part of the 1800's. In 1908 the ruling prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha proclaimed himself tsar of a fully independent Bulgaria, until the unsuccessful Balkan Wars of 1912-1913.

Bulgaria fought in both World Wars on the German side and under the treaty of Neuilly in 1919 it lost its outlet to the Aegean Sea as well as some territory to Yugoslavia. In 1940, under German pressure, Romania was forced to restore the southern Dobruja to Bulgaria. In 1941, out of gratitude, Bulgaria actively joined the Axis. In 1944 Bulgaria signed an armistice with the Soviet Union and in 1946 the monarchy was abolished and the Communists took full control.

All during the period from 1900 to 1944 the German influence was an effective force in Bulgaria and as Bulgaria had little industrialization of its own it was indebted to the assistance and supply of arms it received, in limited measure, from Germany.

It is well to remember that in modern times Bulgaria has been torn between two large forces, Germany and Russia, and that with the Russian designs on Finland Bulgaria was drawn more closely to the German issue. In 1940 Germany approved large scale sale of arms to Finland climaxed by a political agreement signed in September 1940. On September 23 Roumania also adhered to the Axis pact with German troops and armour entering the country to protect the Roumania oil field, followed by a rapid deterioration of Russian-German relations. A Russian memorandum demanding the withdrawal of German troops from Finland and a Russian-Bulgarian pact of assistance was not answered by Germany and plans for a German attack on Russia were ordered for May 1941.

In November 1940 Hitler reinforced the German troops in Roumania, made demands on Hungary for assistance in an attack on Russia and called King Boris of Bulgaria to Berlin where it was decided that German troops would be invited into the country. In 1941 additional talks with Bulgaria resulted in an agreement for Bulgarian assistance in the attack on Greece as a preliminary step to the Russian

BULGARIAN LUGERS

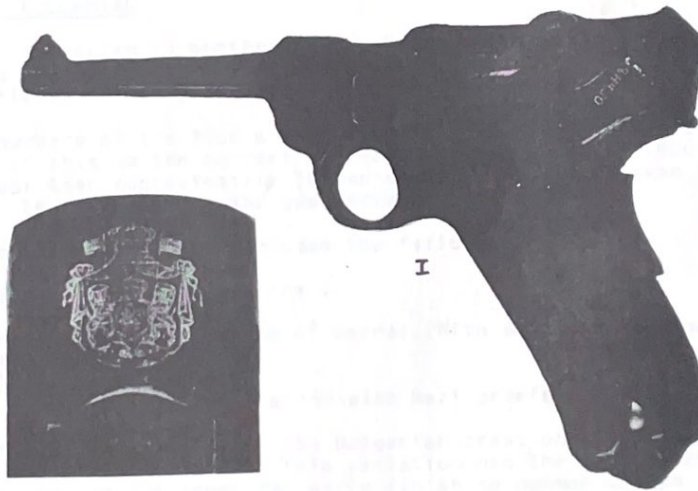
invasion. By October 1944 Russian strength had forced Bulgaria and Finland out of the war and had linked forces with Tito's partisans in Belgrade, and the outcome of the war was already a foregone conclusion.

Until recently it was only a matter of speculation that Bulgaria had adopted the Luger as early as 1900. In the November issue of the LUGER JOURNAL the first printed word of the 1900 Bulgarian appeared in an article written by Mr. Charles Kenyon perhaps the fore most authority on the Bulgarian Lugers. At that time Mr. Kenyon indicated that only four examples of the 1900 were known and as of this writing only one additional 1900 has been located.

THE 1900 BULGARIAN LUGER

The 1900 Bulgarian is similar in most respects to other 1900 variations. It has a 4 3/4" barrel, is of 30 cal., has the long receiver with a grip safety, dished toggles, toggle lock, the DWM scroll etc.

The most spectacular difference in the 1900 Bulgarian is in the beautiful receiver crest of this model. It has a center rampart lion, flanked on either side with a rampart lion bearing a banner flag. The three lions are enclosed in draped curtains and streamers surmounted by the Bulgarian crown. This "early" crest appears on the 1906 variation as well while the 1908 has just the center part of the crest.



The safety marks also are completely unique to the Bulgarian. In the Cyrillic alphabet the marks mean "fire" and appear in the upper portion of the safety area. The marks are visible when the piece is ready for firing. As the 1900 Bulgarian is the ONLY 1900 Luger to have safety marks it is accepted that the Bulgarian introduced this feature to later Luger production. (The 1900 Bulgarian does not have the "white" unblued area that appears on the other 1900 series Lugers.)

In addition to the two and possible three known original 1900 Bulgarians, those with 4 3/4" barrels, there are three known pieces with replacement barrels. One of these is a Bulgarian arsenal job the other two are Nazi reworks and undoubtedly came into being during the pre WW2 period or during the war itself when weapons were so badly needed in Germany. The Nazi variations and the

BULGARIAN LUGERS (THE 1900 BULGARIAN CONTINUED)

arsenal job all have 9mm barrels requiring a machining to the front of the receiver (in the Nazi reworks) and a machining of the barrel shoulder in the arsenal variation. These alterations were necessary due to the longer threads of the barrels in the early, longer receivers. The three 1900 Bulgarians then fall into one of the following three categories.

1. Original 4 3/4" 7.65mm barrel.
2. Arsenal rework with 4" 9mm barrel with the barrel shoulder machined back approximately 5/64". The barrel bears a standing lion inside an oval proof.
3. Nazi rework with a machined receiver face, a 9mm 4" barrel and on one of these reworks the serial number appears on the left front of the receiver. One of the Nazi variations also has had the original flat recoil spring replaced by the later coil type recoil spring in a very neat conversion. This piece is in the author's collection of Nazi Lugers.

The serial numbers of the 1900 Bulgarians are all above 20000 and probably run into the 20700 group. Previously the Luger Journal reported that a guess placed the original lot at about 1,000 pistols. A recent Bulgarian source has advised that the number was probably 750 or less and that very few of these survived to the Second World War.

THE 1906 BULGARIAN

The 1906 Bulgarian is another little known variation. The examples examined included both 7.65m and 9mm with the latter being replacement variations. No original 9mm 1906 Bulgarians were examined.

Serial numbers of the 1906 are in the 1100 range and into the 1300's. If this is the correct and complete range of the 1906 Bulgarians then approximately 300 were made. The 1900 never the less is the more rare of the two series.

The examples of the 1906 included the following.

1. Original 4 3/4" 7.65mm barrel.
2. Arsenal variation with 9mm 4" barrel. (With Bulgarian arsenal proof.)
3. Nazi rework with 9mm 4" barrel with Nazi proofs.

The 1906 like the 1900 bears the Bulgarian crest on the receiver and DWM on the toggle area. This variation has the grip safety, no stock lug and the beautiful early finish so common to DWM products.

THE LUGER JOURNAL WOULD LIKE TO CORRESPOND WITH OWNERS OF 1906 BULGARIAN LUGERS AND PICTURES WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED.

1908 BULGARIAN

The 1908 is the most common of the Bulgarian Lugers and at that it is quite rare. This Luger is unusual in several ways. It does not have the usual DWM toggle marks but bears the small "later" type crest where DWM usually appears and on the chamber where the "early" Bulgarian crest appeared is the DWM scroll. There is no stock lug, no grip safety and the lanyard loop also is unique in that it appears on the lower portion of the rear grip strap.

THE 1908 BULGARIAN CONTINUED

The safety area also bears the Cyrillic characters but on this Luger they appear on the lower portion of the safety area instead of the upper portion as they do on the 1900. The marks are also visible when the piece is ready for firing.

The serial numbers on the 1908 are varied indeed with three and four digit numbers being reported. One interesting 1908 was even in two digits with a 4 3/4" barrel in 7.65mm and no grip safety—definitely in the 1908 category. This may have been a test piece with later ordered pieces in the usual configuration.

Another interesting 1908 Bulgarian has a small letter C under the 1300+ serial number. This piece is in the 9mm caliber.

Several variations of reworks have been seen on the market of late, most of these have been reblued and very poorly buffed prior to being refinished. These are Russian pieces and were reworked for the American collectors market a few years ago.

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE BULGARIAN LUGERS WILL BE MOST APPRECIATED.

UNITED STATES ORDNANCE LUGERS

A previous LUGER JOURNAL edition described the US Ordnance Lugers in detail including the complete serial number range. An additional means on identifying these pieces has just come to light and that information is that the Ordnance Lugers have the "GERMANY" marking purposely omitted. The "GERMANY" mark usually appears on the front of the receiver in the 1900 series Lugers with the American Eagle.

COMMERCIALS(ANY ADVERTISEMENT IN THIS SECTION IS 2¢ PER WORD)

FOR SALE 42 MAUSER, DATED 1940, cal. 9mm #66331(? AUTHORS QUESTION AS THE AD WAS SENT IN WITH A 5 DIGIT NUMBER)over 94% blue,VG+ condition,good bore,good grips, ex+ mech. condition. All match except for mag. \$95.00 Gil Hoffman, 3102 Grange, Trenton, Mich.,48183

FOR SALE 1906 LUGER COMMERCIAL 9mm, 98% blue, all matching,Ex Bore and grips, \$350 or will trade or accept as part trade the following. 1908 first issue; 1920-23 Comm. with long barrel;Simson and Co.; K Date; G Date; Late S Krieghoff. Douglas Stake, 8137 Irvine St., North Hollywood, California.

FOR SALE BY RALPH SHATTUCK, 6661 Castle Drive, Birmingham, MICHIGAN. 1916 ARTILLERY, near mint bore, all match. fine tune front and rear Ex+ \$225; DWM 1906 SWISS MILITARY CONTRACT mint in and out, 4 3/4" barrel, 30 cal.,\$400. Plus many other pieces for sale. Monthly list 20¢ each or \$1.00 1/2yr. (GOOD BUYS)

WANTED: RARE AND COMMON NAZI ERA AND WW1 LUGERS PLUS OTHER MILITARIES in very good or better condition. Also need Luger accessories, conversions, holsters etc. All Letters answered and top reasonable prices paid. Robert B. Marvin, 19251 Gulfstream Road, Miami, Fla., 33157.

WANTED INFORMATION AND PHOTOS FOR THE LUGER JOURNAL...THE SEARCH CONTINUES AND YOUR HELP IS NEEDED.