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SIMSON & CO (INTRODUCTION)

SUHL

Not a great deal has been written about SIMSON Lugers and the importance of these Lugers in the minds of collectors naturally varies greatly. Some collectors consider that SIMSON Lugers are like the odd ball ERFURTS and about as common while others realize that SIMSON Lugers are about as scarce as KRIEGHOFF'S.

It is this collectors opinion that eventually the value of SIMSON Lugers will reach a level about that of the KRIEGHOFF'S, which truly have enjoyed an increased value as a result of their LUFTWAFFE affiliation. (THE REFERENCE TO KRIEGHOFF LUGERS CONCERNS THE MILITARY VERSIONS.)

While a great deal is known about many variations of Lugers an atmosphere of mystery surrounds certain other types and the SIMSON'S are in this latter group. One reason for this general lack of exposure is probably the result of the historical age from which the SIMSON'S came. Even today many questions concerning Germany in the 1920'S are unanswered warranting a close look at this historically important era.

BACKGROUND (SECRET REARMAMENT)

From the very beginning of the treaty of Versailles on January 1, 1920, and perhaps properly from the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, the Germany army leaders had done almost everything possible to circumvent the provisions of the treaty.

The treaty, for example, banned the General Staff in its normal, or traditional form, and yet the Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr, Colonel-General Hans von Seeckt, was successful in creating an equivalent TRUPPENAMT, which was under his own immediate supervision. He was also successful in adding, contrary to the Treaty, to the strength of the standing army. Taking advantage of the exaggerated patriotism of the Poles in 1920 and 1921, he claimed that it was impossible to defend Germany's eastern boundaries with only the 100,000 man army permitted by the treaty. Consequently the Reichswehr was secretly supplemented by formations disguised as labor battalions. As a result the 20,000 man force of ARBEITS-KOMMANDOS (later known as the BLACK REICHSWEHR) was formed within the Berlin-Brandenburg Military District, commanded by Fedor von Bock (later Hitler's Field Marshall in Russia).

Seeckt was not merely satisfied with preserving the best of German World War One forces but he also looked to future military expansion to a degree that required his planning for economic mobilization. Therefore in November 1924 he established a highly secret ARMAMENT OFFICE (RUSTUNGSAMT) for the purpose of determining the requirements in munitions and equipment for an army of sixty-three divisions. The support of German industry was also sought and in most cases was received without reservation.

SIMSON AND CO. LUGERS (BACKGROUND CONTINUED)

It is important to remember that the period under consideration is not one effected greatly by the NAZI influence. During the period of planned re-armament Hitler and his followers were outcasts and especially rejected by most of the senior officers who were veterans of World War One. It was these senior officers who felt Germany had been sabotaged politically and whose ambitions for Germany were aimed at restoring her Officer Class.

The year 1925 saw the most serious attempts to evade the disarmament provisions of the Versailles treaty over the whole of Germany rather than just on the Eastern frontier as they had previously. These nationwide evasions all had their origins in the problems regarding the Polish frontier however.

In 1926 the creation of a military dictatorship in Poland, under Pilsudski, and a strengthening of the Polish Army made the situation over the Polish Corridor more acute. There was a great fear in Germany at this time, in spite of the Locarno pact, that Poland would invade Germany.

The resulting treaty evasions were concerned with the illegal increase of military effectives, the development of forbidden weapons, the creation of a secret Air Force, increased Naval activities, and many "minor" military adjustments.

THE ROLE OF SIMSON AND CO.

In the light of the preceeding analysis it is interesting to consider the following outline of events.

1. November, 1918, The Armistice
2. January, 1920, The Treaty of Versailles (prohibitions against Luger production-especially in 9mm)
3. 1920-1921, Problems with Poland and concern for the security of German borders. (creation of the secret Army forces)
4. 1922-1924, Creation of the Simson role in Luger production.
5. 1924, Establishment of the secret ARMAMENT OFFICE.
6. 1925, Nationwide evasions of the treaty provisions.
7. 1926, Increased concern over Poland and fear of invasion.
8. 1926-1927, Industry secretly preparing for full scale re-armament within the limits of discretion.
9. 1926, Creation of a new office in the Reichswehr called "POLITICAL DEPARTMENT" meaning WEHRMACHT.

While there is so much mystery concerning the period of the 1920's in Germany that certainly many false conclusions have been and can be drawn concerning the role the Luger played in this period it is THE LUGER JOURNAL'S hope to aid in some measure to a better understanding of the various roles played by each manufacturer especially by SIMSON in the interlude years.

It is known that the DOUBLE DATES, THE 1920 MILITARIES, THE 1920 POLICE MODELS, AND THE REGULAR 1908/14 MILITARY MODELS WERE USED by the military and police forces in the 1920's. (Including the Reichswehr) Also DWM reissued and remanufactured Lugers (1920 and 1923 Commercials) for the overseas markets (mostly the US) to attract much needed capital.

Why then was SIMSON involved in post WW1 Luger production. Certainly with the left over models of WW1, and the various 1920 variations, there were enough Lugers to arm the small 100,000 man army allowed under the treaty. Also the treaty allowed the army to be established before SIMSON even commenced its production and it is unlikely that the army would wait for SIMSON to provide the needed Lugers when there were sufficient Lugers already available.

THE ROLE OF SIMSON AND CO. (CONTINUED)

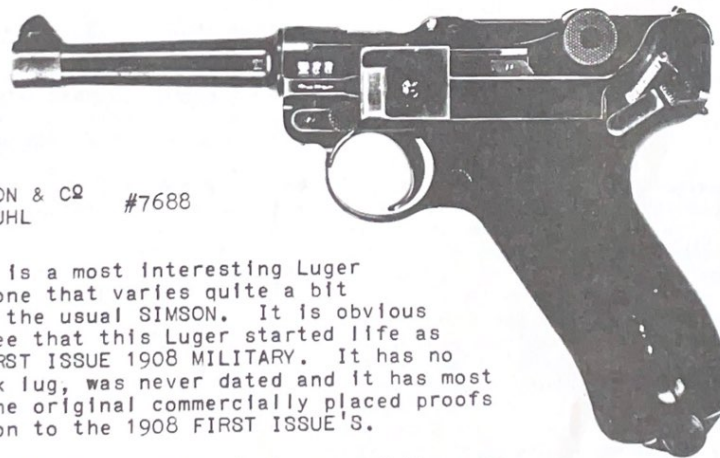
Further there is evidence that SIMSON also made commercial Lugers (more on this later) as well as military models and contrary to popular opinion there is considerable evidence, a la proof marks etc. that DWM continued to provide Lugers right up to the move to Mauser for the commercial and military markets.

Therefore, contrary to popular opinion and until proven otherwise, THE LUGER JOURNAL is of the opinion that DWM provided the Lugers for the 100,000 man army and for most of the commercial markets, and SIMSON, because it was not well known and did not have treaty inspectors on its premises, prepared Lugers for the SECRET ARMY of ARBEITSKOMMANDOS. To cover up this production we believe that SIMSON manufactured, & assembled, a limited number of commercial Lugers in several variations. And while Germany may have said that SIMSON had the contract to provide Lugers for the "LEGAL" 100,000 man army we do not believe that they were ear-marked for the Reichwehr at all. To our knowledge this is the first time this thought has ever been presented and we are prepared to defend it until proven otherwise believing that all available evidence supports it. (CONFLICTING OPINION IS CERTAINLY WELCOME)

ONE LAST NOTE

Under the treaty Germany has surrendered the greater part of her fleet and her heavy artillery. Her army was restricted to 100,000 men (voluntary enlistment only) and her Navy to 6 battleships and a corresponding number of lesser ships.

The amounts of war material of all kinds were strictly limited by Allied Naval, Military and Air Commissions who had as many as 2,000 officers plus enlisted men stationed in Germany to see that the provisions of the treaty were enforced. These inspectors remained in Germany until 1927 and presented a real barrier to Germany's rearmament ambitions. It has been written that Germany was subjected to a measure of disarmament more rigorous and complete than any recorded in modern history. Thus there was a real need for Germany to find a means to supplement its Luger production right under the noses of the allied inspectors. We believe it was SIMSON who played the major role in this intrigue.



SIMSON & CO #7688
SUHL

This is a most interesting Luger and one that varies quite a bit from the usual SIMSON. It is obvious to see that this Luger started life as a FIRST ISSUE 1908 MILITARY. It has no stock lug, was never dated and it has most of the original commercially placed proofs common to the 1908 FIRST ISSUE'S.

This SIMSON was undoubtedly one of those re-manufactured for COMMERCIAL use and bears the English word "GERMANY" on the left front frame side rail.