

The Luger Journal

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THE LUGER JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED BY ROBERT B. MARVIN, 19251 GULF-STREAM ROAD, MIAMI 57, FLORIDA.

EDITORS NOTE: THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED AS THE GRACIOUS CONTRIBUTION OF MR. CHARLES KENYON, 1549 ALASKA ROAD, WOODBRIDGE, VIRGINIA. MR KENYON IS AN ACCEPTED AUTHORITY ON BULGARIAN LUGERS AND THE FOLLOWING WORK IS THE FIRST PUBLISHED MATERIAL ON THE RARE 1900 SERIES BULGARIAN LUGER PISTOL.

NUMBERS IN PARENTHESIS REFER TO ILLUSTRATIONS ON PAGE THREE OF THE JOURNAL. THE PHOTOGRAPHS USED IN THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE WERE SUPPLIED BY MR. KENYON AND ARE AVAILABLE FROM HIM AT \$5.00 PER SET. THE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE EXCEPTIONAL FULL SIZED PICTURES SHOWING SHARP DETAILS AND WERE TAKEN BY J. McCLANAHAN, WOODBRIDGE, VA.

THE 1900 BULGARIAN LUGER BY : CHARLES KENYON

Ranking among the rarest of the early Lugers is the model 1900 Bulgarian. So rare in fact that many advanced collectors are not aware of this variation. So little is known of the 1900 Bulgarian that a description of this item has never before appeared in print.

Only four examples of the 1900 Bulgarian have been brought to light as of this writing. Two of the four examples known to the author are as originally manufactured and two have been re-barreled to 9mm. In addition a "parts" gun has been noted having a 1900 Bulgarian frame with the barrel, receiver and toggle assembly later replacements. This particular frame is of much interest however as it tentatively sets the known low serial number range.

The general description of the 1900 Bulgarian is identical to other 1900 variations. The barrel length is 4 3/4 inches, is of 30 cal., has the long receiver with a grip safety, dished toggles and a toggle lock, and the DWM scroll appears on the front toggle link etc. Of course, as with nearly every commercial/contract variation of the Luger pistol, the model 1900 Bulgarian has distinctive features that identify the variation.

Two especially distinctive features are incorporated in the model 1900 Bulgarian. The first is an "early" Bulgarian crest on the receiver ring. (Illustration #2) The second feature, which is indeed unique, is the safety lever markings. (Illustration #1)

The receiver crest is referred to as "early type" and consists of a center rampart lion, flanked on each side by a rampart lion bearing a banner flag. These three lions are enclosed in draped curtains and streamers surmounted by a crown. This early crest also appears on the 1906 Bulgarian contract variation.

The second distinctive feature is the safety lever markings on the frame. The upper safety lever area (Illustration #1 or 2) is marked in the Cyrillic alphabet with the Bulgarian equivalent of the word "fire". This marking is identical to that found on the scarce model 190E Bulgarian, the exception being that the model 190E is marked in the lower area rather than the upper area.

In addition, a close examination of the safety lever area discloses another slight, but significant difference between the 1900 Bulgarian and other model 1900 variations. On all other variations of the model 1900 the lower safety lever area is not blued but left in the white unblued state. This "not blued" portion, when visible, indicates the weapon is "on safe". The 1900 Bulgarian variation however does not have a "non-blued" portion but is entirely blued. Every examined example of the 1900 Bulgarian is identical in this respect and all have the original finish ranging from near mint to approximately 60% blue remaining. Obviously, then, the Bulgarians were the first to order or specify a safety marking and since the model 1900 Bulgarian is the only 1900 variation to bear safety markings it is reasonable to assume this feature was incorporated at the request of the Bulgarian Government. Before this variation came to light it was thought the practice of marking the safety area originated with the 1904 Navy model Luger.

The two examples of the 1900 Bulgarian with replacement barrels are also of much interest to collectors and warrant further description. One example in the authors collection is, he feels, an early alteration done at a Bulgarian arsenal shortly after the introduction of the model 1908 Bulgarian. This alteration or barrel replacement was accomplished by using a 4" 9mm barrel threaded for the later "short receiver" length. The barrel was machined at the shoulder area, that is the shoulder that fits against the receiver was faced off so that the barrel could be fitted deeper into the "long receiver" of the 1900 model. The original 30 cal. type front sight was then fitted to the new barrel which is not numbered. The barrel does have a proof mark about 3/8" in front of the receiver ring. This proof appears to be a standing lion inside an oval of approximately 3/16" in height.

The second type of alteration or barrel replacement is definitely of Nazi era. In this alteration, the "long receiver" was machined back 5/64" to the short receiver length and a 4" 9mm barrel was fitted to the shortened receiver, leaving the weapon with an "over hund" appearance, as the frame was not shortened. The replacement barrel bears a waffen proof. In addition, the entire original serial number has been stamped on the left front side of the receiver. The style is identical to the late military style found on the S-42, 42, and byf code Lugers of the Third Reich. While the two examples with replacement barrels cannot be considered factory originals they are never-the-less collectors items of the first order.

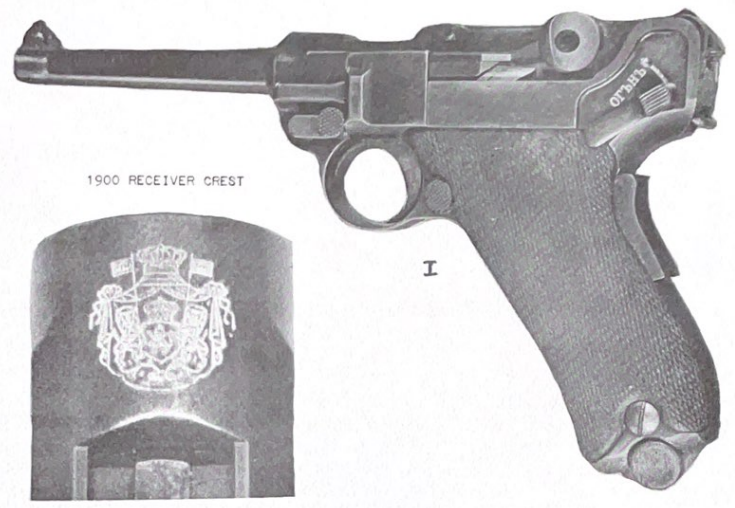
SERIAL NUMBERS OF THE 1900 BULGARIAN LUGER VARIATION

The serial number range of the 1900 Bulgarian indicates manufacture near the end of the model 1900 production. As mentioned, a model 1900 Bulgarian frame has been examined which bears a serial number in the 20,050 range. The highest serial number recorded at this time is in the 20,670 range. The serial numbers of the two examples in the authors collection are 20,661 and 20,384. (THE PUBLISHER OF THE LUGER JOURNAL OWNS BULGARIAN NUMBER 20057) By using the known high and low serial numbers as a guide, and considering manufacture to have run consecutively, we can definitely say that at least 620 examples were manufactured. It is the authors opinion that the entire lot was for 1,000 pistols in the serial range from 20,000 to 21,000. If any reader has ANY variation of the 1900 model in or near this serial number range, the author and the Luger Journal would like to hear from him so that a precise figure can be noted and reported in a later issue of the Luger Journal. Also any information, comment or question concerning the above data is invited.

Charles Kenyon, 1549 Alaska Road, Woodbridge, Virginia

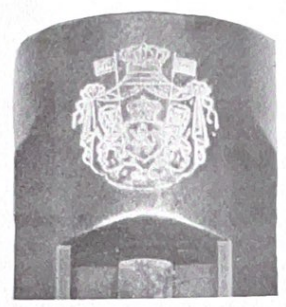
The Luger Journal

THE 1900 BULGARIAN LUGER



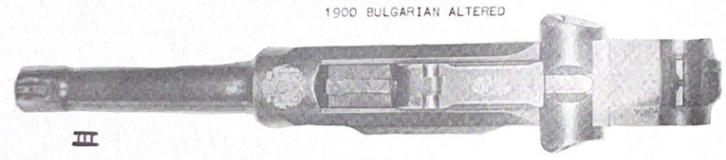
I

1900 RECEIVER CREST

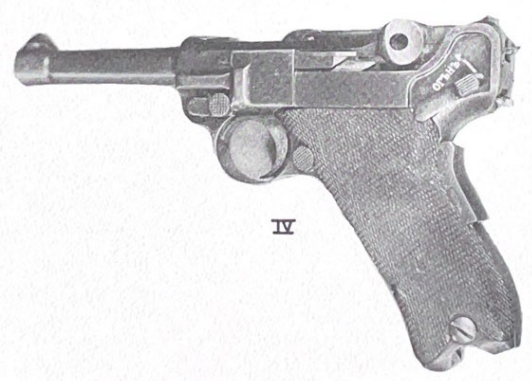


II

1900 BULGARIAN ALTERED



III



IV



V



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1900 BULGARIAN NUMBER 20057 (NAZI REWORK)

Bulgarian Luger number 20, 057 is an early example of the DWM Bulgarian Luger. Manufactured at the end of the 1900 series, but at the beginning of the 1900 Bulgarians, Luger 20,057 combines the ideas of two distinct military philosophies.

First manufactured in 30 cal. Luger 20,057 was intended to upgrade the military might of Bulgaria, a Country steeped in Military traditions and Nationalistic pride. The ordering and using of some 1,000 Lugers represented a major step forward for Bulgaria. A step usually considered to be that alone of Switzerland and the United States, the first Governmental users of the Luger as a military weapon.

Undoubtedly Luger #20,057 remained in Bulgaria through the First World War and into the Second for this pistol has the Nazi proof marks, the sign of a new order, upon the 9mm barrel. Obviously added by the German partner the 9mm barrel of WW2 vintage represents the philosophy of a nation guided by strong Nationalistic motives and International objectives. Caught up in this new order Bulgaria, now stuck with her military companion, provided the early Lugers to be altered and refitted to the needs of the Third Reich. How many of these Bulgarians remained to be so altered and how many of those altered are still in existence is a matter of only speculation. Certainly, in War, materials as well as men are consumed and the mortality of these rare Lugers must have been high. (Less than 1000 were made in 1900)

The receiver front of Luger 20, 057 has been ground down to accomodate the shorter threads of the 9mm barrel. In every other aspect the Luger is as originally issued. Interestingly the early DWM blue, already some thirty years old when the Nazi barrel was added, has proven to be far the more durable of the finishes and is in considerably better shape than that of the barrel. Also much of the original straw coloring remains and the grips and magazine appear to be original.

If there is one particularly outstanding feature of the 1900 Bulgarian it is in the striking Coat of Arms that appears on the receiver. The emblem of Bulgarian Monarchs is perhaps the most beautiful of any marking put on a Luger pistol, excepting perhaps the American Eagle so endeared to American Collectors.

So in this, one of the rarest of all Lugers, we have the evidence of the Luger Pistol's ability to perform as a military sidearm some forty years after its manufacture. I can think of no greater measure of the Luger's effectiveness.

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THE VALUE OF THE BULGARIAN LUGERS

Naturally the value of any commodity depends upon the demand and the availability of the item being valued. There is also the unmeasurable value that an owner may place upon an object depending upon the value of the object to him, in a sentimental sense.

That the 1900 Bulgarian is rare is beyond question, what the actual value is, on the market depends upon one collectors desire to own what another has, and his ability to pay for it.

One of the original Bulgarians carries a \$5,000 price tag, \$1,750 would not buy the other known original barreled Bulgarian. The replaced barrel models are valued at \$750 to \$1,000 and there is no apparent room for bargaining.

ADVERTISEMENTS:

WANTED: Concentric Rings Naval Magazine. W. D. Davidson, 2806 23rd Ave., West. Seattle, Washington. 98199

WANTED: 1906 9mm Commercial Luger. Must be in excellent condition. Will buy outright or trade. Douglas Stake, 8137 Irvine Street, North Hollywood, Calif.

FOR SALE: 1900 Swiss Military, #4746, 93% original blue, bright bore, nice grips. \$225. 1920 Commercial near mint, cased in wooden box, #661, mint grips \$145., 1914 Navy, Dated 1916, 100% old re-finish, Bore near perfect markings clear \$150., G Date S/42, 95% original finish, nice grips, VG+ bore \$89.50, 1917 Erfurt matching clip, 97% original blue, nice grips bore VG, \$89.50, 1915 DWM with British Proofs, 93% original blue VG+ Bore, nice grips \$74.50, 1916 DWM AS ABOVE with mirror bright bore and better finish, \$77.50, 1915 DWM, 95% original blue, bore good plus, \$69.50, Deathead 1913 some finish, some light pitting, markings clear, bore VG+, shows use bargain at \$115., 1940/42, Shows 95% original finish, nice grips and bore \$89.50, American Eagle 1900 85-90% original blue, nice bore and grips, sharp Eagle \$225.00, 1918 DWM nice grips, bore VG+, 90% original blue \$59.50. All are original, with matching numbers. Have some shooters from \$60. and up, numbers do not always match and our choice. Nice bores all 9mm. 24Hr. inspection privilege given. Buyer pays all shipping rates. Biehler's Gun Room. 1585 Bergen Blvd., Leonia, New Jersey, 07605.

FOR SALE: 1920 Commercial DWM, cal. 7.65mm, Barrel 3 5/8", All matching and all original. Excellent condition, Guaranteed absolutely perfect inside and out. \$90. Charles W. Foote, 1140 Violet Drive, Birmingham, Ala. WANTED American Eagle, and Carbine.

WANTED: Nice Luger Carbine, any series, also Artillery Model and Navy. Please quote price and condition first letter. Robert B. Marvin, 19251 Gulfstream Road, Miami 57, Florida.

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