

MEMENTOS WITH HISTORY, 59

LUGER?...PARABELLUM?...NO!!.....LUR-PANZER!!



Two LUR-PANZER pistols SNs 74494 and 74903 respectively, bearing date code N*1 indicating proofing in 1968.

Many years ago I saw in Ian Hogg and John Weeks's book "Pistols of the World", a photograph of a pistol made in the late 1960s by Echave y Arizmendi, S.A (ECHASA) of Eibar, Spain, that was marketed under the name of "LUR-PANZER"; It was a pistol most probably exclusively produced for the North American market, and it is indeed in the US that an occasional specimen may be found.

The LUR-PANZER, at least externally, appears to be an almost identical copy of the ERMA LA-22, made and marketed by ERMA WERKE, of Dachau, Germany, from 1964-1967; This pistol was itself a copy, in 22 LR instead of 9 mm caliber, of the famous Luger-Parabellum; No doubt both the ERMA LA-22 and the LUR-PANZER owed their existence to their maker's desire to commercially capitalize on the almost mythical attraction exerted by the P.08, adapting it to the .22 LR cartridge, which was easily

obtained and also simplified the pistol's design, making its manufacture much more economical.



P.08 Luger (Parabellum) pistol made by Mauser in 1,941 (byf-41), cal. 9 mm Para., variation known to American collectors as a “Black Widow”.

The above information, from Hogg & Weeks's book, is confirmed by my friend Juan. L. Calvo in his book “La Industria Armera Nacional, 1830-1940”, adding that the LUR-PANZER's production ended in 1,969 when ECHASA went out of business....Very little is known about this pistol of which, in more than forty years of collecting and assisting to more than 30-40 gun shows per year, I have been able to obtain only two specimens, plus a third one that escaped me; I know of a few others from the internet where they are illustrated and can be easily found with a Google search.

The two specimens in my collection, serial numbers 74494 and 74903, both bear the date code N*1 indicating proofing in 1,968; Noting that there are only 409 units between both serial numbers I conclude that production was, indeed, very limited....In an attempt to reach a conclusion as to total production numbers I will appreciate very much any input from other collectors.

The pistol illustrated in Hogg & Weeks's book bears the Echave y Arizmendi's logo on the grip panels: the initials E y A in a circle divided into three thirds by a central Y, a logo that evokes the old Spanish Army property marking on its pistols in the early 20th century, similar to Mercedes-Benz's three pointed star in a circle; This logo is also found on the left side of the frame next to the word “LUR”, followed by “CAL 22 .LR/ MADE IN SPAIN”; I have seen another specimen in the internet where the grip panels bear the word “PANZER” inside a diamond, while my two specimens have had their original grips replaced by those from an ERMA LA-22 , one of a brown-reddish woodlike color and the other one, black. The serial numbers, proof marks, and date code letter, are on the right side of the frame; curiously both specimens are missing the front sight blade, one having been removed and the other broken.



Commercial markings on the “LUR-PANZER” pistol.



Proof marks, serial number, and date code letter on the “LUR-PANZER” pistol.

The name “LUR-PANZER” is an interesting challenge for someone interested in trade marks, such as myself; I initially suspected that it was a Basque word which had been coupled to a German one trying to evoke the famous Panzers of World War II, but as the word “Lur” in Basque means “earth” or “mother earth” it really has no relevance to Panzers.

I have reached the conclusion that ECHASA wanted to reinforce the image of the P.08 “Luger” or “Parabellum” by calling this pistol the LUGER-PANZER, but, upon finding out that the name “Luger” had been copyrighted as a trade mark by the Stoeger Corporation of New York, a well known firearms and sporting goods distributor, as far back as the 1920s, who had also marketed its own version of the P.08 in .22 LR caliber as the “Stoeger-Luger”, it was decided to contract the word “LUGER” into “LUR” and the pistol was christened the “LUR-PANZER”; In my opinion this is most probably the origin of this “mysterious” name, but I am open to any other suggestions.....
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