

Gewehr 43

Gewehr 43	
 <p>Gewehr 43 a.k.a K43</p> <p>Gewehr 43 with scope</p> <p>The G43 with telescopic sight</p>	
Type	Semi-automatic rifle
Place of origin	 Nazi Germany
Service history	
In service	1943-1945
Used by	Nazi Germany
Wars	World War II, and other conflicts around the world
Production history	
Designed	1943
Number built	402,713
Specifications	
Weight	4.1 kg (9.7 lb)
Length	1130 mm
Barrel length	546 mm (21.5 inches)
Cartridge	7.92x57mm Mauser
Action	Gas-operated
Muzzle velocity	775 m/s (2,328 ft/s)
Effective range	500 m, 800 m with scope
Feed system	10-round detachable box magazine
Sights	iron sights, Zf42 optical crosshair sight

The **Gewehr 43** or **Karabiner 43** (G43, K43, Gew 43, Kar 43) is a 7.92x57mm Mauser caliber semi-automatic rifle developed by Nazi Germany during World War II. It was a modification of the G41(W) using an improved gas system similar to that of the Soviet Tokarev SVT40.

History

Germany's quest for a semi-automatic infantry rifle resulted in two designs - the G41(M) and G41(W), from Mauser and Walther arms respectively. The Mauser design proved unreliable in combat when introduced in 1941 and at least 12,755 were made. The Walther design fared better in combat but still suffered from reliability problems. In 1943 Walther introduced a new modified gas system with aspects of the G41(W) providing greatly improved performance. It was accepted and entered into service as the Gewehr 43, renamed Karabiner 43 in 1944, with production amounting to just over 400,000 with production only lasting from 1943 to 1945.

The Gewehr 43 was never mass produced and was never general issue, the official list of issued units was to be 1 in every platoon, and those were to be issued to a select specialist (designated marksman/engineer). Despite the Gewehr being a good improvement over the problematic Gewehr 41, and being a more effective combat rifle over slower bolt-action rifles, the Gewehr 43 was never as reliable or as robust and simple as the Allied rifles like the American M1 Garand and Russian SVT-40, nor was the G43 a common enough rifle, for every 1 Gewehr 43 produced by the Germans, the Americans produced 50 Garands (as the primary American service rifle and the first semi-automatic to general issue in any force) and the Soviets produced 20 SVTs.

Though the Gewehr 43 was generally considered to be a good semi-automatic rifle, had good accuracy, and did fairly well in combat (better than the G41), it was more complicated to produce than Allied rifles, and was not as mechanically reliable as American and Russian semi-automatic rifles, the Germans were fighting against the tide of war, and the Gewehr rifles were produced much more crudely and primitively than the Allied weapon factories. Since it was never generally issued, or mass produced, the Gewehr 43 was never a big contender among Nations with general issue semi-automatic rifles like the U.S. and the USSR.

Gewehr 41(M) and G41(W)

By 1940, it became apparent that some form of a semi-automatic rifle, with a higher rate of fire than existing bolt-action rifle models, was necessary to improve the infantry's combat efficiency. The army issued a specification to various manufacturers, and both Mauser and Walther submitted prototypes that were very similar. However, some restrictions were placed upon the design:

- no holes for tapping gas for the loading mechanism were to be bored into the barrel;
- the rifles were not to have any moving parts on the surface;
- and in case the autoloading mechanism failed, a bolt action was to be included.

Both models therefore used a mechanism known as the "Bang" system (after its Danish designer Soren H. Bang). In this system, gases from the bullet were trapped near the muzzle in a ring-shaped cone, which in turn pulled on a long piston that opened the breech and re-loaded the gun. This system is in contrast to the more common type of gas-operated system, in which gasses are tapped off from the barrel, and push back on a piston to open the breech to the rear. Both also included 10-round magazines that were loaded using two of the stripper clips from the Karabiner 98k, utilizing the same German-standard 7.92x57mm Mauser rounds.

The Mauser design, the G41(M), failed. Only 6,673 were produced before production was temporarily halted, and of these, 1,673 were returned as unusable. The Walther design, the G41(W), is in outward appearance not unlike the Gewehr 43. Most metal parts on this rifle were machined steel, and some rifles, especially later examples utilized the bakelite type plastic handguards. The Walther design was more successful because the designers had simply neglected the last two restrictions listed above.

These rifles, along with their G41(M) counterparts, suffered from gas system fouling problems. These problems seemed to stem from the overly complex muzzle trap system becoming excessively corroded from the use of corrosive salts in the ammunition primers, and carbon fouling. The muzzle assembly consisted of many fine parts and was difficult to keep clean, disassemble, and maintain in field conditions. The rifle was redesigned in 1943 into the Gewehr 43 utilizing a gas system somewhat similar to that on the Tokarev series of rifles, and a detachable magazine. Ironically, the M1 Garand rifle followed a similar course being first designed with a gas trap mechanism which was quickly discarded in production.

G41(W) rifles were produced at two factories: Waffenfabrik Walther at Zella-Mehlis, and Berliner-Luebecker Maschinenfabrik (BLM). Walther guns bear the AC code, and WaA359 inspection proofs, while BLM guns bear the DUV code with WaA214 inspection proofs. These rifles are also relatively scarce, and quite valuable in collector's grade. Varying sources put production figures between 40,000 and 145,000 units. Again, these rifles saw a high attrition rate on the Russian front.

Gewehr 43 / Karabiner 43

In 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union as part of Operation Barbarossa. Just prior to the opening of hostilities the Red Army had started re-arming its infantry, complementing its older bolt-action rifles with the new semi-automatic SVT-38s and SVT-40s. This proved to be somewhat of a shock to the Germans, who ramped up their semi-automatic rifle development efforts significantly.

The SVT series used a simple gas-operated mechanism, which was soon emulated by Walther in the G41(W), producing the **Gewehr 43** (or **G43**). The simpler mechanism of the G43 made it lighter, easier to produce, and more reliable than the Gewehr 41. The addition of a 10-round detachable box magazine also solved the slow reloading problem. The Gewehr 43 was put into production in October 1943, and followed in 1944 by the **Karabiner 43** (**K43**), which was identical to the G43 in every way except for the letter stamped on the side. The G/K43 was issued in very limited numbers in 1944 and 1945 to units of the Wehrmacht.

Total production by the end of the war was 402,713 of both models, including at least 53,435 sniper rifles: the G43/K43 was used as a designated marksman/sniper weapon, fitted with the **Zielfernrohr 43** (**ZF 4**) telescopic sight with 4x magnification. The weapon was originally designed for use with the **Schiessbecher** device for firing rifle grenades (standard on the Kar 98k as well) and the **Schalldämpfer** suppressor, however these accessories were deemed unsuccessful in tests and were dropped even before the rifle made it to serial production. The rifle was also not equipped to use a bayonet. The Gewehr 43 stayed in service with the Czechoslovak army for several years after the war.



Walther K43 semi-automatic rifle



Walther K43 semi-automatic rifle

K 43

The **K 43** is a semi-automatic copy of the Walther Karabiner 43 rifle manufactured by HZA Kulmbach GmbH.

Other Details

There were many small variations introduced on the G/K43 throughout its production cycle. The important consideration is that no changes were made to the rifle design specifically to coincide with the nomenclature change from Gewehr to Karabiner, with the exception of the letter stamped on the side. Careful study of actual pieces will show that many G-marked rifles had features found on K-marked rifles and vice versa. There is therefore no difference in weight or length between the G43 and the K43. Variations in barrel length did exist, but those were the product of machining tolerances, differences between factories, and/or experimental long-barreled rifles. An unknown number of late-war K43 rifles were chambered for the 7.92x33mm cartridge and modified to accept StG44 magazines.^[1]



Walther G43 semi-automatic sniper rifle with a ZF 4 telescopic sight

Though most G/K43's are equipped with a telescopic sight mounting rail, the vast majority of the rifles were issued in their standard infantry form without a scope. When equipped with a scope, it was exclusively the ZF 4 4-power telescopic sight.^[2] No other known scope/mount combinations were installed by the German military on G/K43's during



K43 with scope rail

World War II. Many strange variations have shown up after the war, but all have been proven to be the work of

amateur gunsmiths. Rifles with a broken-off butt are common, as German soldiers were instructed to render semi-automatic rifles useless when in danger of capture.

References

- [1] Senich, Peter R., The German Assault Rifle, 1935-1945, Paladin Press, Boulder, Colo. USA, 1987 p. 147
- [2] Historic Sniper Scopes - A comparative Study - The ZF4 (http://www.snipercountry.com/Articles/HistoricSniperScopes_GwZF4fach.asp)

External links

- Modern Firearms - Gewehr 43 / Gew.43 / Kar.43 semi-automatic rifle (<http://world.guns.ru/rifle/rfl12-e.htm>)
 - (<http://gk43forum.com/forum/main.php>)
 - G43 / K43 Collectors Homepage (<http://www.gewehr43.com/>)
 - Lexikon der Wehrmacht (<http://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/inhaltsverzeichnis1.htm>)
 - www.gunsofthereich.com (<http://www.gunsofthereich.com>)
 - Axis Ordnance Report (<http://www.lonesentry.com/ordnance/karabiner-43-kar-43-semiautomatic-rifle.html>), 1945.
 - G43 - MP44 Collectors Service (<http://claus.espeholt.dk/>)
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