



Imperial War Museum
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R W Koch Esq



EXH/MJW/JF

18 December 1972

Dear Mr Koch

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the 'Liberator' pistol which was produced during the Second World War for use by Resistance groups in occupied Europe.

Partly because of the clandestine nature of this weapon, references to it in our records are sketchy to say the least. However, I have consulted a number of colleagues, not only on the staff of the Museum but also at the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham and can provide you with a little background information which might help you in your research.

It is believed that these pistols were indeed air-dropped to Resistance groups during the war, not only in France but also in the Philippines. I understand that some 50,000 were brought over to England for this purpose, but they were never dropped in the numbers originally envisaged. One reason for this was that both the Free French and, I gather, the Vichy Government, objected strongly to the wide distribution of these unorthodox weapons, feeling that they might be difficult to collect or control after the war and would be potentially dangerous in the hands of political malcontents. In the event, they were dropped in limited numbers to selected groups, although we do not know how many were distributed.

It has also been suggested that, because the unrifled barrel caused the bullet to tumble on impact, the wounds inflicted would be contrary to the terms of the Geneva Convention and this too influenced the Allies in scaling-down their original plans. Moreover, the production of the Sten Gun had reached sufficient proportions by 1943 to enable the Allies to drop this latter weapon in reasonable quantities to the Resistance groups.

The surplus 'Liberator' pistols were mostly de-activated and dumped in the sea. Some specimens have survived and, although they are uncommon, they are not rare. We have several examples in our collections.

I have yet to see a specimen in France and two French friends of mine, who both know something about the Second World War and the Resistance movement, had never even heard of the weapon !

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