



THE ALBANIAN SKS

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The Albanian SKS is now the rarest of all "imported" varieties of SKS found in the world, outside of the North Korean, East German, and Vietnamese models that were war "bring backs", with very few in existence. It is made of milled steel and fires the standard AK 7.62x39 mm cartridge like all SKS, but is different from other country's SKS in several ways. In this article I will attempt to provide some history and observation of this weapon.

I have been collecting Albanian SKS carbines for some time now and currently have around 50 in my personal collection. I have samples from every year of production and have photographed and catalogued them, along with my other SKS carbines at:

[Albanian SKS Photo Collection](#)

The Albanian SKS was believed to be an early Simonov design that was never manufactured by other European countries. It was known locally by the name "July 10th Rifle", after Albania's Independence Day. The Albanian SKS was manufactured at the Umgramsh Factory from 1967-1971 and again from 1976-1979. There is some debate about what happened during the years 1972-1975 but I have never seen or heard of Albanian SKS's from this time period.

Until recently, I had never seen a 1979 rifle. A couple of months ago I bought out J+G Sales when they had 5 Albanians in stock. The salesman listed off the years and said there was a 1969 included. When I received the package imagine my surprise when the 1969 turned out to actually be a previously unseen rifle from 1979!



1979 Albanian

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Photo of 1979 serial number

Estimated production of Albanians over the years is shown in this chart, with figures gathered and put together by Glen Burton:

1967- 980
1968- 570
1969- 2800
1970- 2980
1971- 2620
1976- 160
1977- 660
1978- 4960
1979- 800
Undated- 420

Current opinion is that the undated models MAY be rifles produced in either 1975 or 1980, but this has yet to be proven.

So, there were an estimated 16,950 produced. For unknown reasons the Albanians destroyed or gave away nearly two thirds of them and it is believed that only 5700 are left in the world today. There have been reports that US Government led efforts "encouraged" the Albanian government to collect and destroy over 130,000 Albanian small arms (*their SKS included*) during the mid to late 1990's. This may be why we see limited numbers of them in the world market today.

My best guess is that, according to year produced, current world inventory may be:

1967- 320
1968- 180
1969- 970
1970- 1100
1971- 860
1976- 50
1977- 220
1978- 1850
Undated- 150

I base my assumptions on research I have done and correspondence with other collectors. I have also emailed various weapons and export ministers within Albania for information on production numbers and export figures, with limited response on their parts.

The obvious differences between the Albanian SKS and those from other countries are:

1) The extended length stock and the extended 3 vent upper handguard that extend all the way to the gas block. This photo shows the Albanian on the top and the Russian on the bottom.



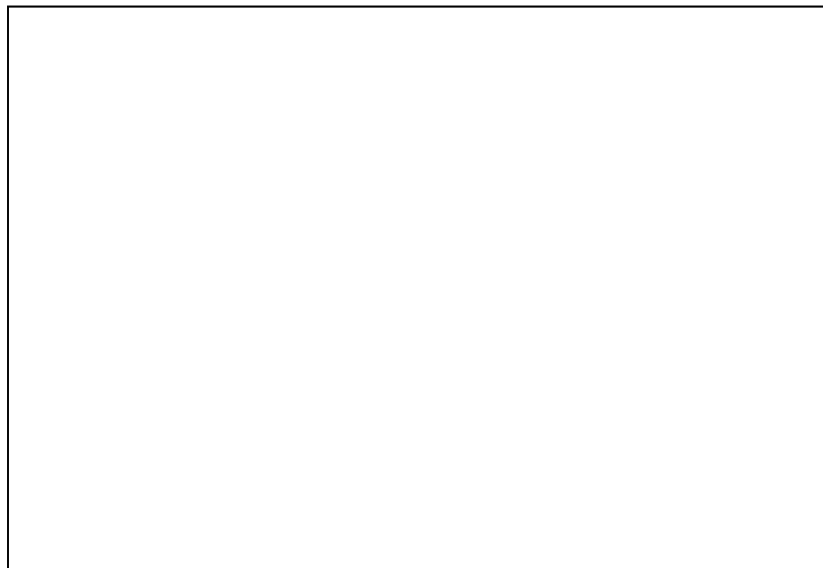
2) The trapdoor butt plate has 2 doors rather than the normal one. This photo shows the Albanian on the left and the Russian on the right.



3) The Albanians use an AK style charging handle rather than the round style used by all other countries. This photo shows the Albanian style on the left and the Russian on the right.



4) The Albanian rear sling swivel is located on the left side of the butt stock as compared to the bottom of the butt stock on other models. This photo shows the Albanian on the top and a Russian on the bottom.





5) The 10 round fixed magazine on the Albanian has a slightly different bottom profile than those on other SKS's. The photo shows the Albanian on top and the Russian underneath.



Albanian serial numbers are, in most cases, stamped on visible parts and usually contain 3-6 numbers followed by a dash and then the last 2 digits of the year of

manufacture. Ex: 02645-78, would be rifle serial number 02645 manufactured in 1978. You will also see electro penciled serial numbers on the gas piston. This is an example of a rifle that I acquired that was not date coded for some reason:



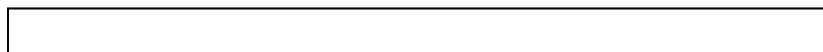
Undated rifle serial number.

The stocks on Albanian SKS are usually of two color types. Rifles manufactured in 1967 and 1968, with some of the 1969 ones, were of a much darker color than all prior years.



Example of 1968 rifle

Rifles manufactured from 1970-1979 on almost always had a beech stock with various shades of orange varnish. Example of 1978 rifle:





The stocks vary in condition from some that are "mint" condition, to some that are in really bad shape. It seems to have been relatively common practice for Albanian soldiers to carve their initials into the stocks of their guns.



Other observations I have made of the Albanian SKS:

- 1)** Trigger pulls run the range from very nice to horrible. This mirrors the standard range of SKS trigger smoothness found in other countries. Testing of trigger pulls revealed everything from 4.5 lbs to 11 lbs, with everything in between.
- 2)** The bayonets on Albanian SKS are all black, spike type bayonets similar to the ones on Chinese SKS except for the color.
- 3)** Accuracy of the Albanian SKS seems to be "better than average" when compared with Russian, Romanian, Chinese, and Yugoslavian SKS. As a matter of fact, I have several that are more accurate than even a Russian Tula that I have that is marked as sniper grade on it's front sight. All of my Albanians are capable of putting 5 shot groups within 4" at 50 yards and 9" at 100 yards.

In summary, the Albanian SKS is well worth collecting. It is an interesting variation of the standard SKS and is a well put together, accurate rifle. Given the low number of these rifles in the world today I believe the law of supply and demand will soon cause their prices to rise quite dramatically.

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