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EIBAR REVOLVERS IN THE GREAT WAR (1)

Sample of the revolver made by “Garate, Anitua y C^a” for the British Army in .455 caliber; Approved as the: “Pistol O.P. with five inch barrel No 1 Mark 1”



Sample of the revolver made by “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a” for the British Army in .455 caliber; Approved as the: “Pistol O.P. with five inch barrel No 2 Mark 1”

The British Army did not favor automatic pistols for military use and, on November, 8, 1915, it approved two Eibar made “Smith” revolvers of special manufacture in the “British” 455 caliber, the first one made by “Garate, Anitua y C^a” and adopted as the “Pistol O.P(old pattern) with five inch barrel No 1 Mark 1”, and the second one, made by “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a”, adopted as the “Pistol O.P with five inch barrel No 2 Mark 1”

This official approval was absolutely necessary for their acquisition by the Army, but even if the approval was in effect until November, 15, 1921, when they were

declared to be obsolete, it is not quite clear if they were actually acquired by the British Government as I have read that most of them, although initially purchased, were rejected by His Majesty's Inspector of Small Arms alleging defects in their construction; However one specimen of the "Pistol O.P with five inch barrel No 1 Mark 1" in my friend Hector Meruelo's collection bearing the British Army's broad arrow property marking confirms their acquisition by the Army.



Presentation specimen of the "Pistol O.P with five inch barrel No 1 Mark 1" with "GARATE ANITUA Y Cia. - EIBAR - ESPAÑA" markings, decorated with Eibarrese damascening, including the insignia of the "Most Noble Order of the Thistle" and an anagram of the recipient's initials; The quality of the engraving more than justifies the signature of the artist on its handle: "Fca. DE GRABADOS DE F. A. LARRAÑAGA" (Agustín Larrañaga)



Revolver model "Pistol O.P with five inch barrel, No 2 Mark 1" marked: "Fca. DE TROCAOLA, ARANZABAL. Y Cia. - EIBAR (ESPAÑA)" on the barrel and with "TAC" logo; Serial number 186 (Photo H. J. Meruelo)



Revolver model “Pistol O.P with five inch barrel, No 1 Mark 1” marked: “MANUFACTURA ESPECIAL DE REVOLVERES / GARATE ANITUA Y C^a. EIBAR (ESPAÑA)”, with “GAC” logo, and with the British Army’s “broad arrow” acceptance marking (Photo H. J. Meruelo)

I already made reference to the firm of “Garate, Anitua y C^a” in Chapter 9 (“Smith” revolvers from other Eibar firms”); The firm of “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a” has its origin in a workshop property of Venancio Trocaola, which first appears in the Eibar Industrial Register in 1899; In 1903 it appears under the name of “Trocaola y C^a” declaring 10 workers, while in 1904 it declared 21 and became the main workshop in Eibar, until it started to be ranked as an arms “factory”.

In 1906, upon Pablo Aranzabal becoming a partner, it changed its legal name to “Trocaola y Aranzabal”, and in 1907, upon the additional joining of Agustin Irazabalbeitia and Fernando Irusta, it became “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a”; It then began to rank as a factory in 1908 when Gregorio de Mugica tells us that “they made Belgian style Smith revolvers, Spanish Hammerless and American revolvers, and they have a patent for a model called Velo-Rapid”; In 1905 they registered the logo “TAC” surrounded by a snake which in 1915 they changed to their initials over a fantastic winged dragon.

The crisis provoked by the start of the Great War made them reduce their work force and were ranked as a ‘workshop’ until 1916 when they again became a “factory”; They were absent from the Register in 1917 and reappeared in 1918; In those times their revolvers were excellent but their quality deteriorated from this point on and the firm was dissolved in 1926 when Venancio Trocaola joined the firm of “Gaztañaga, Trocaola e Ibarzabal” and Pablo Aranzabal continued his association to Fernando Irusta in “Aranzabal e Irusta”.

I have read, although I have not been able to confirm it, that during the Great War “Orbea y C^a” headed a cartel of the main Eibar “Smith” revolver manufacturers, which was organized in order to offer this type of weapon to the warring nations, but the information I have been able to gather for the post-1915 years is confusing: In 1916 the Eibar Register lists as arms factories the following: “Orbea y C^a”, “Garate, Anitua y C^a”, “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a”, Isidro Gaztañaga, Victor Sarasqueta, and, “Hijos de Angel Echeverria”, but, in 1917 only Isidro Gaztañaga and Victor Sarasqueta are listed, with

no mention at all of the other ones (??); Then, in 1918, “Garate, Anitua y C^a”, “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a”, and “Hijos de Angel Echeverria”, again appear, plus, in addition, so do the firms of “Retolaza Hnos y C^a” and “Zulaica y Zavaleta”; In 1919, however, the only factories listed were those of “Garate, Anitua y C^a”, “Trocaola, Aranzabal y C^a”, and Victor Sarasqueta; Then in 1920 to these are added again “Orbea Hnos.”(!), “Beistegui Hnos.”, Francisco Arizmendi, and Bonifacio Echeverria; “Orbea y Hnos.” continues to appear during 1921-23 but, beyond that point, I do not know.



Six shot “Smith” revolver with marking: “REVOLVER MOD 1916 CAL 10,35”, with logo “OH” (Orbea y C^a.) on the frame and grip panels and, “F.TETTONI – BRESCIA” on the frame.

The only maker’s marking on the “Smith” revolver made for the Italian Army are, the “OH” logo on the frame and grip panels, and, “REVOLVER MOD 1916 CAL 10,35” on the barrel, and “F.TETTONI – BRESCIA”, or, “SCOLARI – ROMA”, on the frame, their importers and distributors in Italy.

The “OH” logo is also seen in revolvers made by the firm “LA INDUSTRIAL ORBEA” which, in 1917 applied for a patent, and in 1919 registered the trademark “ORBEA” for its arms and ammunition; However, “LA INDUSTRIAL ORBEA” does not appear in the Eibar Industrial Register as owning any factory or workshop.

In 1921 and 1922 a new “Orbea Hermanos” appears, applying and obtaining patents for “weapons improvements”; This firm, apparently co-existed with a reappearing “Orbea y C^a” which registered, in 1920, the initial “O” as its trademark, and, from this date until 1930 registered several other trademarks and requested several firearms patents.