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## THE “ROYAL” AND “MAUSER TYPE” PISTOLS FOR THE CHINESE MARKET



**ROYAL pistols: Left: Marked: FABRIQUE D'ARMES DE PRECISION / AUTOMATIQUE "ROYAL" BREVETE S.G.D.G. CAL 6,35 m/m; Right: Marked THE "ROYAL" PATENT / AUTOMATIC PISTOL – CAL 7,65 logo ROYAL 'Z' NOVELTY**

The ROYAL trademark for automatic pistols was registered in 1909 by Marcelo Zulaica; A year later he also registered the NOVELTY trademark for “firearms”; In previous articles I mentioned this arms maker regarding his marketing of the ZWLAYCKA pistol patented by his brother Toribio and his being one of the group of manufacturers that joined forces in 1912 to face F.N’s legal threats; At that time he was producing about 10 pistols daily.

However , there is no record of any workshop in his name in the Eibar Industrial Register until 1915, when the firm of “M. Zulaica y C<sup>a</sup>” appears, declaring five employees; One year previously he had registered the “VINCITOR” trademark although he marked his production of “RUBY-type” pistols as the “1914 Model” (page 189); In 1916 this shop operated as the “Royal-Vincitor” S.A and employed 20-30 workers; It disappeared in 1917and may have been succeeded by a new firm, “Zulaica y Zabaleta” which was listed as a factory in 1918 but did not survive the post-war crisis; Marcelo Zulaica may also have been a partner in the firm of “Arizmendi, Zulaica y C<sup>a</sup>”(1914-1922) and was remembered as a very cultured and enterprising person; However, fortune did not smile on him and he ended his days working as an employee of “El Trust Eibarres”.

The firm of “Beistegui Hermanos” had better luck and they obtained Marcelo Zulaica’s agreement to register the trademark ROYAL as their own in 1926, using it for “Eibar-type” pistols which were distributed in China, which was then immersed in constant civil war, by Japanese dealers; At that time the C96 Mauser pistols sold by “Mauser-Werke AG” were highly priced there and this prompted “Beistegui Hermanos” and “Unceta y C<sup>a</sup>” to compete with the German company by offering pistols of this type; As the ROYAL trademark already enjoyed a reputation in that market “Beistegui Hermanos” decided to continue using it in their new “Mauser-type” pistols.

“Beistegui Hermanos” was founded in 1910 by the brothers Domingo, Juan, and Cosme Beistegui Albistegui; It was among those threatened by F.N, in 1912 when it was producing thirteen pistols daily; However it is not until 1913 that it appears in the

Eibar Industrial Register with a shop employing four workers at that time, eight in 1914, four in 1915, and 30-40 in 1916; In 1917 it is absent but reappears in 1918 and from 1920 on it is classified as a factory.

In their products their name is usually limited to the “BH” logo with a design similar to that of Fabrique Nationale’s “FN” and the generic script “Fabrique d’Armes de Guerre”<sup>1</sup>, but also using some other trademarks of their own: DIANA (1912), STOESEL (1913), ANGLO OTTOMAN (1914), BULWARK (1916), LIBIA (1920), PARAMOUNT (1922), ROYAL (1926), the two rampant colts logo (1927), ETAI PISTOL (1930), MM 31 (1932), among others<sup>2</sup>; In their 1919 catalogue their automatic pistols are offered under the BULWARK name, including “Eibar-type” models in 6,35 and 7,65 mm, a “Ruby-type” model, and others inspired on the 1914 STAR.



**Seven shot BULWARK pistol as offered in the 1919 Catalogue, in 6.35 and 7.65 mm calibers.**



**Twelve shot “Eibar-type” pistols, marked: AUTOMATIC PISTOL CAL. 7,65 / ROYAL; The grips bear the ROYAL name and two rampant colts, both registered in 1927**

In order to domestically manufacture Mauser C96 inspired pistols “Beistegui Hermanos” requested a patent for “improvements” in December 1927, beating “Unceta y C<sup>a</sup>”, who

<sup>1</sup> Except for the RUBY specimen shown in Chapter 6 with the CEBRA trademark, property of its makers “Arizmendi, Zulaica y Cia”.

<sup>2</sup> In 1924 he requested the trademark NAGANI EXTRA but was refused

had started applying for patents for this type of pistol in 1928, by a little more than a month; My friend Artemio Mortera's excellent work "Las Pistolas Españolas tipo Mauser" (Artemio Mortera Perez, Valladolid, 1998) describes all the technical details distinguishing these nationally produced pistols from each other, and from the original Mauser C96; The first ROYAL model produced by "Beistegui Hermanos" was a 7.63 mm Mauser caliber, 10 shot, semiautomatic, while a second model of the same caliber and magazine capacity, offered selective semi- or full-automatic fire, and a third model the same but with a 20 round magazine.



**Left: First model ROYAL pistol, marketed under the ETAI PISTOL trademark registered by "Beistegui Hermanos" in 1930 (Photo H. J. Meruelo).**

Following these models came the MM 31 (Modelo Militar 1931) in four variations, all in the same 7.63 mm caliber and all of them with semi- or full-automatic fire selector: One with a 10 round magazine, a second one of 20 rounds capacity, a third one fed by detachable 10, 20 or 30 round magazines, and the fourth one designed to accept the Mauser Schnellfeuer's magazines.



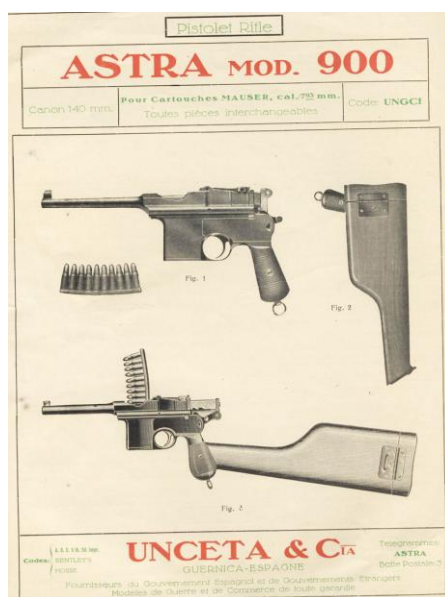
**MM 31 pistols, first model, marked only "MM 31" and the serial number. Left, 10 round magazine. Right, 20 round magazine. (Photo P. Bello)**

Also marketed under the MM31 trademark were the SUPER AZUL "Mauser-type" pistols, a brand derived from the AZUL brand registered in 1922 by Eulogio Arostegui, who directed the workshop founded by his father Salvador Arostegui in 1908; As they bear also the MM31 trademark, the SUPER AZUL pistols have been considered to have been a product of "Beistegui Hermanos" marketed by Eulogio Arostegui; However, Artemio Mortera tells us that it was exactly the other way around.



**AZUL pistols with and without fire selector. (Photo P. Bello)**

Arostegui made some of the parts used by “Beistegui Hermanos” in their pistols so we may consider him to be a subcontractor of that firm; It was his idea to build detachable magazine fed Mauser-type pistols, a characteristic feature of the SUPER AZUL, which is otherwise indistinguishable from the MM 31 fourth variant; As Arostegui lacked the means of distribution possessed by “Beistegui y Hnos.”, it was this firm that marketed SUPER AZUL, side by side with their MM 31.



Turning now to the Mauser-type pistols made by “Unceta y C<sup>a</sup>”, these were marketed under the ASTRA name, starting with the 7.63 mm, 10 round, stripper clip fed, semiautomatic M900, followed by the M901, identical to the M900 except for a fire selector, the M902 with a 20 round fixed magazine and a longer barrel, and the M903 with a shorter barrel and fed by detachable 10 or 20 round magazines; This model also marketed as the “E” was offered in 7.63 mm Mauser, 9 mm Parabellum, 38 Super Auto and 9mm Bergmann (Largo).



**ASTRA 900 pistol, marked: ASTRA AUTOMATIC PISTOL CAL 7,63 PATENTED JULY 12 1928 / UNCETA Y COMPAÑIA GUERNICA (SPAIN)**



**ASTRA Model 902, selective fire (very few were made in semiautomatic only), 7.63 mm Mauser caliber, 20 shot integral magazine, walnut holster/shoulder stock with protective leather boot; One of 7,075 made from 1928-1933; Most were sold to China. (Photo P. Bello)**

I will address those models with full automatic-fire cyclic rate reducing moderator, in a separate chapter; I will end this one by discussing the system used by “Beistegui Hermanos” in order to deliver their weapons to China, which was described by D. Juan Beistegui, son of one of the founders of the firm, to my good friend Ramiro Larrañaga:

“...../.....the Japanese would buy 12 shot ROYAL automatics from us, which we would then ship to Antwerp as “hardware” (in English in the original Spanish text) in separate pieces and different boxes, some containing the barrels, some the slides, some the

frames, all very well numbered so they could be assembled upon their arrival in China; The problem of passing them from Korea to China was taken care of by the Japanese importers; In other sales we shipped MM 31 pistols to Hamburg with their wooden holsters/shoulder stocks, to Bellenhangen y C<sup>o</sup>, who (by the way) kept the best of the products for themselves”.

“Unceta y C<sup>a</sup>” entrusted the exploration of the Chinese market to a German, Ernst Borchers, who, like “Beistegui Hermanos” had to deal with Japanese distributors; In 1931 he improved the distribution system and established a subsidiary in Shanghai with the name of “Astra China C<sup>o</sup> Ltd”; Some specimens bear, in addition to the firm’s name and logo an inscription in Japanese characters which translates to “Made in Japan” or according to L. Antaris in “ASTRA Firearms and Selected Competitor” (FIRAC, 2009) “Made in Sun Country” (??) “sunny Spain” or Japan “land of the Rising Sun” (??)



**ASTRA 900 pistol, marked: ASTRA AUTOMATIC PISTOL CAL 7,63 PATENTED JULY 12 1928 / UNCETA Y COMPAÑIA GUERNICA (SPAIN) and inscription in Japanese characters (Photos H. J. Meruelo)**