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**MACHINE PISTOLS FOR THE GUARDIA CIVIL****9 mm Largo Model F ASTRA, as offered by “Unceta y Comp<sup>a</sup>”**

With the coming to power of the Republic in April of 1931, “for reasons of public safety and order of the Government”, all firearm workshops and factories in the Basque country were confiscated and a Commission was created to take charge of all the arms and munitions stocked in these establishments which were taken over by the Ministry of War without, however, interrupting production; A little later on, the confiscation was limited to so called “weapons of war”, capable of fully automatic fire; The Ministry of War acquired part of them and allowed exportation of the rest by granting licenses which were issued by the above named Commission.

I do not know how many were acquired by the Ministry in total but they did obtain 600 Astra M901s and 750 Astra M902s; I am also not aware of how many were taken from “Beistegui Hermanos”; Since they all were in the 7.63 mm Mauser caliber they could not be used by the Army which used the regulation 9 mm Largo cartridge, so they were issued to the recently created Corp of Republican Assault Guards; The Civil Guard also had expressed a desire for a weapon of this type but due to “regulation problems”

the decision to adopt one was postponed until the revolution in Asturias erupted in 1934, at which time the need to do so was felt more urgently; A field trial was then convened in order to choose a 9 mm Largo caliber, selective fire weapon, equipped with a cyclic rate reducing mechanism so as to make it more controllable in full automatic fire.

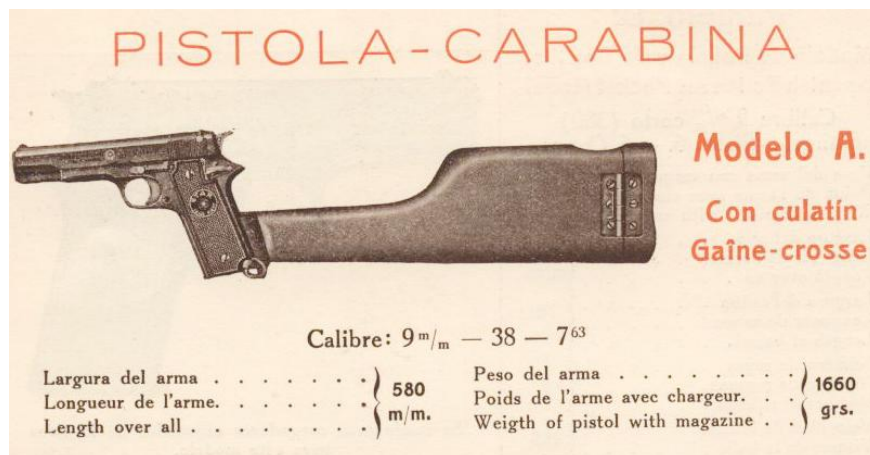
“Unceta y C<sup>a</sup>” brought its new ASTRA Model “F” with rate reducer and “Beistegui Hermanos”, its MM34 (Modelo Militar 1934) with a rate reducing mechanism patented in 1933 by D. Luis Palomo Puyol, Director of the Target Shooting School of the National Federation of Olympic Marksmanship, with the ASTRA Model F winning the competition and receiving a contract for 1.000 units for the Guardia Civil.



**MM 34 pistols, as offered by the firm of “Beistegui Hermanos” in their two variants, with and without, barrel cooling fins (Photo P. Bello)**

Beistegui Hermanos suffered an unfortunate incident in the trials which was described years later by D. Juan Beistegui Albistegui, son of one of the founders as follows:

“A mechanism to control the rate of fire by simply exerting pressure on the trigger was under study in 1934 in order to present it at the convened trials in Madrid, so the experts there could decide which design to adopt, when precisely in that month of November of 1934, in what in Gil Robles’s times was called the Asturias Revolution (Gil Robles right wing leader of the CEDA party), and which affected not only Asturias but also Eibar and Vizcaya, and due to the urgency of the situation I accepted a design invented by a Sr. Palomo of Madrid”.... (Here he describes D. Luis Palomo’s system) .../..... (The trials) were to take place in Madrid in the Santo Domingo Hill Street and I was entrusted with delivering three 9 mm ROYALS; To my great chagrin that afternoon, these new customers told me that our pistols were no good , that they fired only the first shot and could not chamber the second round; I found out that the 9mm Largo cartridges to be used in the trials were the same as those that Palomo showed me and that they had been loaded at the Munitions Factory in Seville; I then took the three pistols with me back to Eibar (as there was still some time remaining in Madrid before closing the trials) and asked my father to test them with domestically loaded (Seville) cartridges and not with the FN or GECO cartridges that we always used for foreign sales, so they were loaded with a weaker charge and they functioned well but, penetration was minimal; We then changed the recoil springs for less powerful ones, expressly made, and thought we were ready for the trials; But that old fly-fisherman, Sosola (Agustin) Churruca, and my father, tested them again with these weaker springs but now using GECO ammunition and, the springs were torn to pieces“.



**Model A STAR “pistol-carbine” advertisement, and 7.63 mm caliber Model A STAR “pistol-carbine”, SN A5949, with adjustable tangent sights and slot for attachment of a wooden holster/shoulder stock (Photo H. J. Meruelo)**

I do not know if the “STAR” Firearms Factory presented its 9 mm Largo selective fire Model AD with their patented cyclic rate reducer to these trials; Bonifacio Echeverria, at the same time as it was developing its “military model” pistols of 1920, 1921, 1922, etc, was also developing their commercial versions under the Model A designation; These were offered not only in 9mm Largo but also in .45 ACP, 38 ACP, 9 mm Parabellum, 9 mm Browning, and 7.63 mm Mauser, plus also in “carbine” variants with a shoulder holster/stock similar to that of the C96 Mauser.

In 1930 the firm obtained a patent for a selective fire mechanism which when applied to the Model A resulted in the Model AD; In February of 1934 it also obtained a patent for a full automatic fire rate reducing device which was used in the Model AD 9mm Largo and competed unsuccessfully with the ASTRA Model F; Nevertheless, in spite of this, according to Jesus Núñez in his work on weapons of the Guardia Civil (“El Armamento de la Guardia Civil, 1844-2002”, Armas Magazine, 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Supplement), an uncertain number of these weapons were acquired by the Civil Guard before July 1936 (start of the Spanish Civil War) and some also after the war, in 1943, were issued to border units that were then still fighting guerrillas.



**Model MD STAR pistol with fire selector, rate reducing mechanism, and wood holster/shoulder stock (Photo P. Bello)**



**“PLUS - ULTRA” pistol in its selective fire versión (Photo P. Bello)**

I am not aware of “Gabilondo y C<sup>a</sup>” having presented any weapons to the 1934 trials but In 1933 a patent had been issued in their name for “a burst fire mechanism for all automatic pistols, long and short, in all calibers”, which, according to Nelson and Musgrave in “The World’s Machine Pistols and Sub machineguns” (T.B.N Enterprises, 1980) was applied to their 22 round magazine, 7.65 mm caliber, semiautomatic PLUS ULTRA pistol (marked PLUS ULTRA but, also according to these authors, referred to by persons closely associated to the manufacturers as the NON PLUS ULTRA); And indeed, around this time “Gabilondo y C<sup>a</sup>” listed in their catalogue “the new automatic 7.65mm, 22 shot, PLUS ULTRA and RUBY EXTRA pistols”.



**“Ruby-type” pistol, cal. 7.65 mm, with selective fire mechanism; Nine shot magazine; No makers markings; Due to its lack of a shoulder stock it must have been uncontrollable in full auto fire mode.**