

13

PISTOLS OF THE REPUBLICAN “WAR INDUSTRIES” 1936-1939 (1)

Model 1921 9 mm RE (República Española) pistol made in Alginet, Valencia; Around 15,000 were made; Marked “CAL 9m/m Largo”, logo “RE”; (Photos H. J. Meruelo)

After the start on the Civil War on July,18,1936 a great number of industries were created in order to supply the forces that defended the Republican government, which on February, 3, 1937 confiscated all industrial sectors related to war, except for those located in Cataluña, which were organized by its autonomous government, the *Generalitat de Catalunya*.

On August, 7, 1936 the Generalitat had created a “*Comisio d’Industries de Guerra*” in an attempt to adapt to military production those workshops and factories of the chemical and metallurgical industries; This Commission was composed of a Sidero-metallurgic delegation which organized the production of armaments, munitions, fuses and armored vehicles, a Chemical delegation in charge of explosives, primers and detonators, and an Aviation delegation in charge of airplane manufacture.

The organization of the industries confiscated by the Republican government was delayed until June, 28,1937 when three delegations of Armaments of the Ministry of Defense were created: Center, North and Cataluña; This process climaxed on August, 11, 1938 when those war industries dependent on the *Generalitat* were intervened by the central Republican government in order to unify its activity in a National Council of War Industries created in October 1938; The war ended only five months later on April, 1, 1939.

Among the pistols made by the “*Industrias de Guerra de la República*”, it was the then Army regulation “pistol Model of 1921” (the Astra 400) that was produced in largest numbers, between 20,000-23,000 units in total including those made in Valencia and Cataluña .



Model 1921 F. ASCASO pistol, SN 1528, with wood grips, marked: F. ASCASO / TARRASA / CATALUÑA, 9m/m LARGO and Fca No 290; With a 20 round magazine

The largest number, around 15,000 units, were made in the Alginet, Valencia, workshops with the "RE" logo of the Spanish Republic, followed by the production of Factory 290 of the *Industries de Guerre de Catalunya*, located in the city of Tarrasa and run by the C.N.T (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores*) the National Workers Union; Its pistol was named the F. ASCASO in honor of Francisco Ascaso, an anarchist leader killed in Barcelona in the gun battles of July, 19, 1936 (first day of the Civil War); Around 5,000-8,000 units of this pistol were made, some with smooth wood grips, some with plastic, pebbled, grips with the F. ASCASO marking.



F. ASCASO Model 1921, 9 mm Largo pistol, SN 749, with plastic grips; Marked F. ASCASO / TARRASA / CATALUÑA, 9m/m LARGO and Fca No 290 (Photos H. J. Meruelo)



Variant of the Model 1921 9 mm pistol without grip safety, made in Valencia in a minimal number, lacking any markings except for the serial number, 17 in this specimen

In addition to the RE and F. ASCASO variants of the ASTRA model 1921 pistol a third variant was made in very limited numbers in the same city of Valencia, lacking the grip safety; The few known specimens have no markings except for the serial number; However they do exhibit a fine finish; The highest number recorded is 368; Other known numbers, according to L. Antaris are, 15, 21, 23, 29, 73, 102, 161, 213 and 368.



Variant of the Model 1921 9 mm pistol without grip safety, made in Valencia in a minimal number, lacking any markings except for the serial number, 213 in this specimen (Photo H. J. Meruelo)