

6

EIBAR AUTOMATICS IN THE GREAT WAR

“RUBY” pistol, cal 7.65 mm, 9 shot, 88 mm barrel, marked: GABILONDOS Y URRESTI, EIBAR-RUBY CAL. 7,65

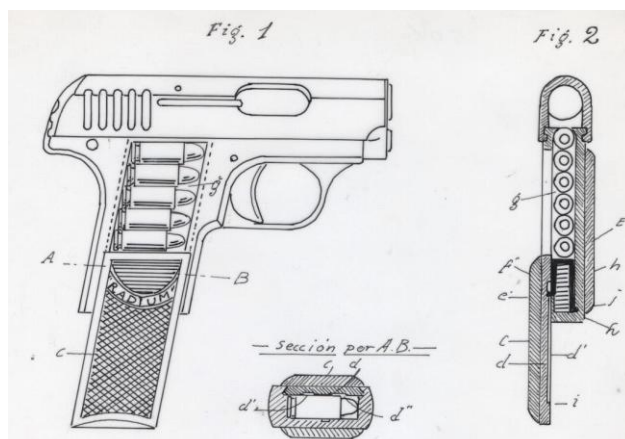
With the start of the Great War the closing of the markets and the freeze on international credits created a difficult situation for the Eibar arms makers; The Town Hall had to assist the unemployed by starting construction of the Eibar-Aguinaga highway, where many gunsmiths worked as laborers with pick and shovel, and by creating “popular kitchens” which provided food at nominal cost.

This situation changed radically in the second half of 1915, as the Allies, with their own industries fully engaged in the construction of heavy weapons and materiel, looked to the Eibar arms industry as a source of handguns, which were very useful in the hand to hand combat of trench warfare.

The demand was mostly for “RUBY” type pistols, the 9 shot, 7.65 mm, Eibar “Browning” pistols, as marketed by “Gabilondos y Urresti” under the “RUBY” trademark, with the French initially contracting for the delivery of 10,000 per month and increasing the demand to 30,000 per month in August of 1915.

“Gabilondos y Urresti” was founded in 1904 but it does not appear in the Eibar Industrial Register until 1907 with a shop employing four workers, increasing to eight workers in 1908-1914; It was not one of the manufacturers included in the group that confronted Fabrique Nationale’s legal threats in 1912 and started production of Eibar type pistols in 1913, using the trademark “RADIUM” for the marketing of pistols with a loading system patented that same year by Guillermo Echeverria and Valentin Vallejo, which featured an unconventional loading system for these 6.35mm Eibar type pistols where the rounds were loaded one by one through an opening created by sliding down one of its grip panels; This prompted Vazquez de Aldana to ironically make the following comment in his amusing work “Arms and Defense”: “RADIUM: Such is the name they gave this pistol, just as they could have named it anything else ;It is just another Eibar type with the advantage of having the disadvantage of not having a clip but a fixed magazine..../....It has, therefore, the advantage of having the disadvantage of requiring nine different movements in order to load it, when others do it in only three; Otherwise it is no different from its compatriots; In other words, it has the disadvantage of having the

advantage of being inferior to the other ones". (A. Vazquez de Aldana, "Armas y Defensa", Madrid 1916)



“RADIUM” pistol sketch, patented by Guillermo Echeverria and Valentin Vallejo in 1913

In 1914 this firm changed its trade name for that of “Gabilondos y Urresti” with the joining of a new partner named Gabilondo; In this year it registered the “RUBY” trademark, used in pistols very similar to the 7 shot, 7.65mm caliber, “VICTORIA” pistols except for a longer grip allowing a 9 shot capacity; “Esperanza y Unceta” was making the “VICTORIA” pistols under Pedro Careaga’s, and some of their own patents, obtained in 1911 and 1912; There was no patent at all under the name of “Gabilondo y Urresti” or “Gabilondos y Urresti”; All they owned was the “RUBY” trademark.

When the French Army decided to adopt the RUBY pistol “Gabilondos y Urresti” was far from being able to satisfy the quantity demanded and subcontracted its production to other shops; In 1917 a good number of shops cease to appear in the Eibar Industrial Register something which some believe was due to the fact that they were working exclusively for “Gabilondos y Urresti”, who had opened a factory in the city of Elgoibar.



“Esperanza y Unceta”, “VICTORIA” pistols; Left, seven shot, marked: 7,65 1911 MODEL AUTOMATIC PISTOL / “VICTORIA” PATENT, logo “VICTORIA EU”; Right “Ruby-type”, nine shot, marked: 7,65 1911 MODEL AUTOMATIC PISTOL / “VICTORIA” PATENT, logo “EU”.

The fact is that not all RUBY marked pistols were made by “Gabilondos y Urresti”, as many other makers marketed them with newly registered trademarks, such as ASTRA (Esperanza y Unceta, 1914), ALKAR and PANAMA (Alkartasuna S.A., 1914 and 1915), EXPRESS (Garate, Anitua y Cia), IZARRA (Bonifacio Echeverria, 1917), ERRASTI (Antonio Errasti), M.ZULAICA (Marcelo Zulaica), etc; Therefore instead of speaking of the “RUBY” pistols we should refer to “RUBY-type” pistols, as many were marketed under different names:



Nine shot, “Ruby-type” pistols; Left: marked: JUAN ESPERANZA Y PEDRO UNCETA-GUERNICA (ESPAÑA) / CAL 7,65 PISTOLA AUTOMATICA PATENTADA “ASTRA” MOD. 1915.; Right: marked 7,65 1916 MODEL AUTOMATIC PISTOL / ASTRA PATENT. (Photos H. Meruelo)



Nine shot, “Ruby-type” pistols; Left marked: S.A. ALKARTASUNA / FABRICA DE ARMAS / GUERNICA, logo “ALKAR”; Right marked: 7,65 1914 MODEL AUTOMATIC PISTOL / M.ZULAICA & C° EIBAR



Nine shot, “Ruby-type” pistols; Left: marked PISTOLET AUTOMATIQUE CEBRA / BEISTEGUI HERMANOS Cª - ESPAÑA. Logo “AZ” (Arizmendi, Zulaica y Cª). Right: BONIFACIO ECHEVERRIA (ESPAÑA) EIBAR / PISTOLA AUTOMATICA / “IZARRA” CAL. 7,65 (Photos H. Meruelo)



Nine shot, “Ruby-type” pistols: Left: marked PISTOLA AUTOMATICA CALIBRE 7,65 / GARATE ANITUA...EIBAR (ESPAÑA); Right: marked CAL 7,65 PISTOLET AUTOMATIQUE “DESTROYER” / I. GAZTAÑAGA-EIBAR.



Model of 1914 STAR , eight shot, 7,65 mm caliber, pistol; 130mm barrel; Marked AUTOMATIC PISTOL STAR PATENT and STAR CAL 7,65 (Photos H. Meruelo)

This, however, was not the case with the STAR Md. 1914, cal. 7,65 mm, pistols also acquired by the French Army, which were the product of patents owned by Bonifacio Echeverria, who also owned the STAR trademark of which 24,700 were acquired, a very small number compared to the more than 900.000 units provided, not only to France, but also to Romania, Greece and Italy.