

ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, 1788-1931

(34)

CARBINES AND MUSKETS OF THE ROYAL CORP OF “GUARDIAS ALABARDEROS” (HALBERDIER GUARDS) FROM 1841-1931

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)

The Royal “Alabarderos” (Halberdiers), oldest of all the units of the Royal Household ,trace their origin to the Company of “Alabarderos” of the King Fernando the Catholic (1475-1516) and it is said they never used firearms until the night of October, 7, 1841, when they had to use them in order to foil the attempted kidnapping of the young Queen; After this event it was decided to arm them with a model of “long carbine” with bayonet, the “Carbine transformed to percussion in the “de a 17 en libra” (18 mm) caliber for Alabarderos” mentioned in 1863 by Javier Santiago y Hoppe, a model that I have, so far, not been able to identify.

B. Barceló describes the armament issued to this Royal Corp in September of 1868 as consisting of “260 rifled carbines, 180 needle-fire carbines, 30 revolvers, 322 swords and 260 halberds”; The rifled carbines were the model of 1857, the revolvers, the Lefaucheux model 1863, and the 180 needle-fire carbines, all of which were confiscated by the “Voluntarios de la Libertad” (Volunteers of Freedom) upon the start of the Revolution, must have been of the Soriano system, the only needle-fire system made in Spain in any significant quantity.



Needle-fire “tercerola” of the Soriano system, single shot, specimen number 3700 in the Collection of the Museo del Ejército, dated 1855, marked “PRIVILEGIO DE INVENCION / SORIANO LO INVENTO - MADRID”, number 330; 500 mm long, rifled barrel, 15 mm caliber; Overall length 1,050 mm.

In the Museo de Artillería Catalogue (1911), the Soriano system (Donato Soriano Garrido, inventor of the system) “tercerola”, number 3700 of the Collection, is commented as follows: “It was tried by the Talavera Cavalry Regiment, which received one hundred of these weapons and they were returned after the trials, as they were not found to be suitable for Army use”.

The date 1855 is also seen on a model of Soriano system carbine of which I know of the actual existence of two specimens, numbered 10 and 19, respectively; This must have been the model of needle-fire carbine used by the Royal Halberdier Guards in 1868.



Soriano system needle-fire carbine, single shot, dated 1855, marked “Nº 10 PRIVILEGIO DE INVENCION / SORIANO LO INVENTO - MADRID”; 652 mm long, 15 mm caliber, barrel with bayonet attachment stud; Overall length 1,225 mm. E. Gorostiza collection.

The only explanation I can think of regarding the existence of these models of “tercerola” and carbine of the Soriano system, is that they were made to equip the Royal Corp of “Guardias de S.M. la Reina” (Guards of H.M. the Queen) formed in February of 1853 by fusing the two Companies of Royal Halberdier Guards and the Squadron of Guards of H.M. the Queen into two Brigades, of Cavalry and Infantry respectively.

Upon the radicals reaching power in August of 1854 the Royal Corp of Guards of H.M the Queen was suppressed, the Cavalry Brigade was disbanded, and the two Companies which made up its Infantry Brigade recovered their denomination of Royal Halberdier Guards.

The construction of the two models of Soriano carbines was completed in 1855; The “tercerolas” were given to the Cavalry and were tried by them unsuccessfully, and the carbines given to the force they were intended for, now called again Royal Halberdier Guards, who kept them in storage, probably without ever using them, as we may deduce from the inclusion, amongst the models in service in 1863, of the “carbine transformed to percussion, in the “de a 17 en libra” caliber, for Halberdiers”; They probably discarded them upon being issued the Model of 1857 rifled carbines, in its variant for “Cazadores”.

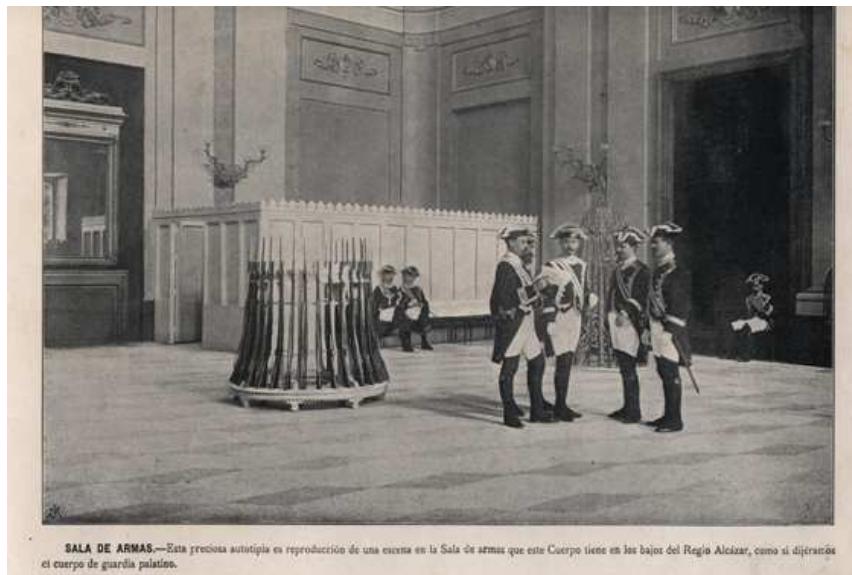


Model of 1857 rifled carbine for “Cazadores”; Aldasoro contractor, dated 1861, 839 mm long, 14.4 mm caliber barrel; Overall length 1,230 mm.

In the Catalogue of the Museo de Artillería, the model of 1857 rifled carbine, specimen number 3703 of the Collection, is fitted with a spectacular model of halberd-bayonet documented as “Proyecto Aldasoro”, which was proposed, unsuccessfully, by this businessman (D. Juan Aldasoro Uribe) as equipment for the Royal Halberdier Guards.



Halberd-bayonet mounted on the model of 1857 carbine specimen, number 3703 of the Collection of the Museo del Ejército; It weighs 0.790 Kg. and its blade is 433 mm long; Brass hilt marked “ALDASORO” on its cross guard.



SALA DE ARMAS.—Esta preciosa autóptica es reproducción de una escena en la Sala de armas que este Cuerpo tiene en los bajos del Real Alcázar, como si dijéramos el cuarto de guardia palatino.

Note the gun rack with Model of 1893 Mauser rifles, in this photograph taken from the book “El Ejército Español, colección de fotografías instantáneas”, Luis Tasso, Barcelona, circa 1895.

On the 31st of October of 1868 the Royal Corp of Halberdier Guards was extinguished by the Provisional Government born of the September Revolution, but was re-established by Alfonso XII in March of 1875; Its Guards then were issued Model of 1871 Remington rifles which, just as the previous rifled carbine of 1857, was also of Army issue, as was later on the Model of 1893 Mauser rifle, which substituted it.

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