

**ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, 1788-1931  
(40)  
HALBERDS, PARTISANS, AND SWORDS,  
OF THE ROYAL CORP OF HALBERDIER GUARDS**

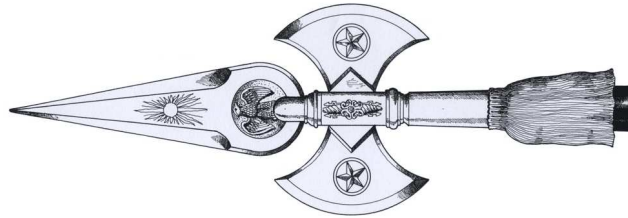
**(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)**



**Halberd of the Royal Corp of “Guardias Alabarderos”; Both the 265x34 mm lance blade, and the 240x195 mm ax blade, are engraved on both sides, the ax blade bearing the Arms of the Royal Household, inscribed “Rl. Fabrica de Toledo” and “Isabel 2ª” on one side and “Año de 1849” on the other side. E. Gorostiza collection.**

I previously discussed this Royal Corp in Chapters 34 and 36; In 1788 the Company of Royal “Guardias Alabarderos” (Halberdier Guards) included: 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 second Lieutenant, 1 Adjutant, 1 First Sergeant, 1 second Sergeant, 1 Chaplain, 1 Surgeon, 4 squad Corporals, 4 second Corporals, 128 Halberdiers, 3 Drums, 1 Fifer and 6 Musicians; From the Captain to the Adjutant they were Major Officers with Army ranks from Field Marshall to “Comandante”, and Minor Officers the Sergeants and Corporals, with Army ranks from Captain to sub-Lieutenant; The Halberdiers were recruited from veteran Army Sergeants and they were armed with halberd and sword; One specimen of the halberd, inscribed “CARLOS III” and dated “AÑO DE 1789”, is shown in the Catalogue of the “Museo de Artillería” (1911), specimen number 1600 of that Collection.

During the War of Independence, in May of 1810, a Company of Halberdier Guards was formed in Cadiz with those Guards who had escaped from Madrid; It included 1 Captain, 1 Adjutant, 1 Sergeant, 3 first Corporals, 3 second Corporals, 1 Drum, 1 Fifer, and 61 Guards ; Their counterparts in the Guard of the “Intruder King” , the Personal Guard of José Napoleon, were armed with a model of Partisan, a specimen of which, number 6590, is shown in the 1911 Catalogue of the Collection of the “Museo de Artillería”.



**Partisan used by the Personal Guard of the king José Bonaparte, specimen number 6590 of the Artillery Museum Collection. Drawing by Eduardo Jiménez Sánchez-Malo**

Upon the return of Fernando VII in 1814 the Company of Royal Halberdier Guards was formed by 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 second Lieutenant, 1 first Sergeant, 1 second Sergeant, 1 Chaplain, 1 Surgeon, 4 squad Corporals, 4 second Corporals, 128 Guards, 3 Drums, 1 Fifer, and 6 Musicians; It was reorganized in June of 1822 with a Main Staff and two Companies; The Main Staff formed by 1 “Comandante”, 1 first Adjutant, 1 second Adjutant, 1 Surgeon, 1 Chaplain, 1 Corporal Drummer, 3 Drums, 1 Fifer and 6 Musicians; Each Company had 1 Captain, 2 Lieutenants, 1 sub-Lieutenant, 1 first Sergeant, 3 second Sergeants, 6 Corporals, and 100 Halberdiers.

In 1824 it again was composed of one Company with 1 Captain (a Brigadier or Colonel), 3 Lieutenants (Lieutenant Colonels), one in charge of supplies, 3 “Alférez” (Captain) one acting as Adjutant, 1 first Sergeant, 4 second Sergeants, (Alférez), 8 first Corporals, 8 second Corporals, 126 Halberdiers, 1 Chaplain, and 1 Surgeon, but there is no mention of Drums, Fifers and Musicians; There were probably 2 Fifers and 2 Drums.



**Partisan used by the Corporals of the Company of Royal Halberdier Guards during Fernando VII’s reign; Two specimens , under number 1605 in the Collection of the Artillery Museum; Drawing by Eduardo Jiménez Sánchez-Malo.**

During Fernando VII's reign the Corporals were equipped with partisans and the Halberdiers with halberds which differed only in small details from the model dated 1789 as we may conclude from the description of specimen numbers 1603, 1604, and 1607 of the Catalogue of the "Museo de Artillería", which are respectively dated 1814, 1816, and 1823.

In 1836 the Company included 16 Chiefs and Major and Minor Officers and 128 Guards; Its strength was increased in August of 1841 and two Companies were formed, each one with 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 First "Alférez", 1 second "Alférez", 1 first Sergeant, 3 second Sergeants, 8 Corporals and 100 Halberdiers.

After the incidents of the evening of October, 7, 1841 they were armed with carbines with bayonets and infantry sabers: the carbine was the "Carbine converted to percussion for Halberdiers" mentioned by Javier Santiago y Hoppe in 1863, and the saber, the same as the Infantry saber that I mentioned in Chapter 27, was used by all services in substitution of the sword.

In 1845 they were reorganized with a Main Staff and, in each Company, 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 first "Alférez", 1 second "Alférez", 1 first Sergeant, 4 second Sergeants, 10 Corporals, 120 Guards, 2 Drums, and 2 servants.

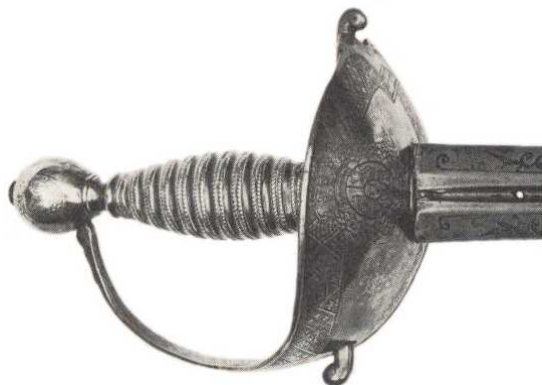
In 1848 a new model of dress sword was approved ... "it is determined that , once the new swords are delivered to the Royal Corp of Halberdiers the sabers they now use are to be given to the *Guardia Civil*", according to Royal Order of August 25 of that year; The new sword, with the blade inscribed "Real Cuerpo de Guardias Alabarderos" and marked "Fabrica de Toledo" and dated, just as the halberd was no different from those used previously by the Royal Corp; The use of the halberd was limited to gala days as the arms for daily use were the carbine and bayonet.

As I explained in Chapter 36, in February of 1853, the Companies of Royal Halberdier Guards were fused with the Squadron of "Guardias de S.M la Reina" (Guards of H.M. the Queen) under the denomination of "Royal Corp of Guards of H.M. the Queen", forming two Brigades, of Infantry and Cavalry respectively, with two Companies each; In 1854 the Cavalry force was eliminated and the two Companies of Infantry recovered their denomination of Royal Halberdier Guards, until extinguished by the September Revolution of 1868.

Upon Alfonso XII being proclaimed King of Spain in March, 15, 1875 the Corp of Royal Halberdiers was re-established with its two Companies; Its Main Staff was composed of, 1 "Comandante-General" (with a rank of Captain or Lieutenant-General, a Grandee of Spain), 1 second Chief (a Field Marshall), 1 Secretary with a rank of Chief Main Adjutant (a Colonel), 1 second Adjutant (a Lieutenant-Colonel), 1 Chaplain, 1 Main Physician, 1 Major Musician, 1 Master Armourer, 23 Musicians and 1 servant for the General Commandancy.

In each Company, 1 First Captain (a Brigadier), 1 Second Captain (a Colonel), 2 Lieutenants (Lieutenant-Colonels), 2 "Alférez" ("Comandante"), 1 First Sergeant (a Captain), 4 Second Sergeants (Lieutenants), 6 Corporals ("Alférez"), 64 Guards (Sergeants), 2 Drums or Buglers, and 3 servants.

I have not been able to find in the Catalogues of the “Museo de Artillería” the sword identified as having been used by the Royal Halberdiers prior to 1841, when it was substituted by the infantry saber; In the work “Spanish Military Weapons in Colonial America, 1700-1821”, a specimen is illustrated, dating to Carlos III’s reign (1759-1788) which must be considered to be the model on which the sword approved in 1848 was based, a specimen derived from one in the “Real Armería” (Royal Armoury).



**Short sword of an Officer of the Royal Household with silver grip and colichemarde-type blade, circa 1780; From an illustration in “Spanish Military Weapons in Colonial America, 1700-1821”.**

The model of sword approved in 1848 is illustrated in the work “Artillería, Acero y Armas Blancas” (Artillery, Steel and Edged Weapons), where it states that it was made as a single model for Officers and Guards.



**Dress sword of the Royal Corp of Halberdier Guards, model of 1848. Blade inscribed on its obverse / reverse “Artilleria Fabrica de Toledo, Año de 1849” / “Real Cuerpo de Guardias Alabarderos”; Number 51 stamped on the ricasso. Foto Lluc Sala.**

Upon the restoration of this Royal Corp in March of 1875 it was ordained that its dress and equipment be the same as it was upon its dissolution in 1868, and by R.O of June 22 of the same year a model of sword was approved for the “minor Officers of the Corp of Halberdiers”, which was “of the same shape and construction as those of the Guards although shorter and lighter” and to be paid for by the State....”due to the special character of these Officers and not to be given to the rest of the Army”.

In the Army, the Officers had to purchase and pay for their personal equipment, but not so the Minor Officers of this Royal Corp, whose “shorter and lighter sword” was paid for by the State; “Minor Officers” were considered to be the first and second Sergeants and the Corporals, who, during Isabel II’s reign used the same swords as the Guards, but after the Restoration used the sword approved on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June of 1875.

The Major Officers had to acquire “commercial” swords, made by military gear manufacturers, who made them in models adequate for use by this Royal Corp, using blades made at the Toledo Factory



**“Commercial” sword used by a Major Officer of the Royal Corp of Halberdier Guards, circa 1880; Polished brass grip, bearing the Arms of the Royal Household on its guard.**

**Juan L. Calvó  
July, 2012**

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