

SPANISH POLICE CARBINES,

the story continued

by
Paul M. R. Breakey

Mr. Al Castle's article, *Destroyer Carbines*, ([MRJ](#) , May 2003, Issue 149, page 131-134), prompts me to send in my latest findings regarding Spain's use of pistol caliber carbines for their police forces. His photos certainly surpass my sketching abilities. Mr. Castle is quite correct in that I make no attempt to say which type was first or in what time period they were obtained by the Spanish Government. The markings I describe in my March 1996, Issue 63 of the [MRJ](#) were the ones present on the examples in my collection. There may be more types and manufactures of the bolt action 9mm Bergmann carbine. For not being a collector of "...just another 'civilian rifle'", he deserves full marks for his efforts, (misspelling of my name -- forgiven).

With thanks to Mr. Colin Castelli and his wonderful web site ([www: 9mm Largo.com](http://www.9mmLargo.com)) dedicated to the 9mm Largo cartridge and its pistols and rifles, more information has become available about the destroyer type rifle. Readers are

encouraged to visit his site for detail analysis of proof mark identification and date of proof. The site has far more detail than we will be covering here.

The following is a brief review of Spain's carbine purchases leading up to the Destroyer type carbines:

*Winchester Model 1873 lever action musket
caliber .44-40*

Winchester provided 20 and 30 inch barrel full forestocked muskets in the period 1873-1880. Apparently the designs changed constantly with different sights, barrel lengths and saddle ring retention¹. It is reasonable to assume that they would have been furnished with the typical factory furnished steel jointed cleaning rods located in the stock butt trap.

*Oviedo produced Model 1873
caliber .44-40*

As late as 1910, Spanish gunmakers produced copies of all the popular world's guns. Spain did not honor other countries' patents unless the patents were also taken out in Spain and documents confirmed production in Spain. Per Spanish law, the use of "Patent" referred to registration of a trade mark/symbol and was used by Spanish makers to confuse/legitimize their copies². It was this practice that sheltered the copying of the Winchester 1873 by the government factory at Oviedo. The carbines are marked Oviedo. Later, gunmakers in Eibar also copied the Winchester--many according to Madis are dated 1892. The buttstocks have butt traps for cleaning rods.



Note that the above advertisement from the 1960's surplus market shows a Model 1873 illustration but in actuality, it is

probable that the items were actually the Model 1892 copy as described below.

*El Tigre copy of the Winchester Model 1892
caliber .44-40*

Everyone likes improved models, and Spain's gunmakers were no different. The little 1892 Winchester was lighter, stronger and slicker in action compared to the older '73. Large numbers of "El Tigre" marked carbines have been imported in the last thirty years, which supports the supposition that they were large scale police issue. The carbines were introduced in 1923 and are marked "El Tigre" (the tiger), have a tiger stamping, factory sling swivels and a military style tangent leaf rear sight. Buttstock has provision for cleaning rods.



*Bolt action carbines
caliber 9mm Largo Bergmann*

In 1908, Spain obtained 3000 Model 1908 9mm Bergmann automatic pistols for its military. Later purchases were for Campo Giro pistols which served to permanently place the 9mm cartridge into the government military/police procurement system. As Spain had issued .44 cartridges for pistol and carbine armed police, customs and border patrol, the upgrade to 9mm Bergmann pistols opened a requirement for a like carbine to replace the aging .44 carbines. Local gunmakers from about 1912 to as late as 1960 manufactured various types of 9mm Bergmann bolt action box magazine fed carbines. I recently found the web site, 9mmLargo.com which has the most information about the Destroyer type rifle that I have found. I was surprised to find that production continued into the 1960's. The site also attaches a manufacturing date with serial numbers and proof marks. The type I call "type 1" has a Winchester like non functioning tubular magazine under the barrel. The end cap of the tube unscrews to provide access to the cleaning rods stored inside. De Hass³ and the web site speculate that the tube was to contain spare cartridges. I can now confirm that the tube holds the cleaning rods as I was able to purchase a

very nice condition Type 1 with the rods intact. The three piece rods are a direct copy of the Winchester M1873 design. It is interesting to note that Spain continued the tradition of underbarrel cleaning kit storage through the 7.62 CETME automatic rifle and the FR7 and FR8 bolt action 7.62mm rifles. The site identifies my type 1 as being made by Onena.



Onena Carbine
9x23mm aka 9mm Largo
Magazine Capacity - 3 rounds
Weight - 5 lbs

type 1

The type 2 9mm carbine merits comment only that they seem to be scarcer than the other types. The site does illustrate it and attributes manufacture to Ignacio Zubillaga in the 1930's.



type 2

Urban legend has it that the 9mm Largo/Bergmann chamber will digest and fire Colt .38 Super, Colt .38 Auto and 9mm Parabellum cartridges. This started with the Astra 900 automatic pistol. De Hass states that Spanish carbines were produced in these calibers. The 9mm Largo site strongly suggest that only 9mm Largo be used in the 9mm Largo chamber. I bought an as new “Destroyer” brand carbine (type 3) with the right receiver ring flat deeply stamped .38 ACP. Unfortunately a 9mm Largo round chambers nicely to the point that I wonder if the wily manufacturer used the same chamber reamer and marked the rifle as required. To date, there has been no urgent need to fire assorted cartridges in this rifle to test the theory further. The 9mm Largo web site strongly urges reader to use only the cartridges as stamped on the receiver.



Destroyer Carbine
9x23mm aka 9mm Largo
Magazine Capacity - 6 rounds
Weight - 6.3 lbs

type 3

There is another version out there as I have a triggerguard and double stack magazine to fit some kind of a Spanish carbine. 9mm Largo also shows pictures of a model that accepts a German bayonet and has a German Mauser type 98 front sight . Keep looking, there are treasures out there.

¹ **The Winchester Book**, George Madis, 1999

² **Star Firearms**, Leonardo M. Antaris, 2001

³ **Bolt Actions Rifles**, 1st edition, Frank de Hass, DBI Books

Illustrations courtesy of [www: 9mm Largo.com](http://www.9mmLargo.com)