

## Small Arms of the Spanish Civil War

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10 December 2016

Which models of small arms were used in the Spanish Civil War? This note makes a start at answering that question, although it may well be that the question can never fully answered. Arms purchases were particularly chaotic on the Republican side, and the records of many of those purchases are undoubtedly lost. On the Nationalist side, the historical emphasis tends to be on the foreign armed forces sent to Spain (the Italian Corpo Truppe Volontarie and the much smaller German Condor Legion), and not on small arms deliveries. Records of these deliveries likely exist in Spanish, German, and Italian archives, but I have so far found no in-depth study of them.

This note is based on a variety of sources, but with a heavy reliance on Gerald Howson's *Arms for Spain*. Howson's book is invaluable because it details arms deliveries from both Poland and Russia, which together probably supplied well more than half of the small arms imported by the Republicans. Histories of specific types or models of small arms have also been helpful to the extent that they catalog the users of those arms.

This note focuses on small arms: pistols, rifles, submachineguns, and machineguns. Both the Republicans and the Nationalists received antitank guns, antiaircraft guns, artillery, mortars, armored vehicles, and aircraft from abroad, but these weapons are beyond the scope of this note.

## *At the Outset*

At the beginning of the civil war, about 500,000 rifles were in Spain. This total presumably includes arms in government arsenals or in the hands of Spanish military forces and paramilitary forces in Spain. It may or may not exclude rifles in the hands of Spanish military forces not in Spain.<sup>1</sup> Of the rifles on the mainland, the Republicans retained about 200,000 at the outset of the fighting but lost as many as 70,000 in early fighting.<sup>2</sup>

The standard Spanish service rifles of the era were well-made and effective weapons. The Spanish Army had been an early user of the excellent Mauser bolt action rifle, having adopted a version of the rifle in 1891 on a trial basis.<sup>3</sup> In 1893, the army settled on a long and a short version of the Mauser. Both were five shot weapons and both were chambered for a 7x57mm round, which distinguished them from the bulk of Mauser rifles built. Other versions of the 7mm Spanish Mauser followed in 1895, 1916 and 1933.<sup>4</sup> The Spanish army also bought surplus German army Mauser Gewehr 98s after World War One and rechambered them for the 7mm Spanish cartridge.<sup>5</sup> While the Mausers had been in use for more than forty years before the start of the civil war, they were still state-of-the-art weapons. Most of the combatants in World War Two would rely on similar bolt-action rifles as their primary infantry small arms.

Prior to adopting the Mauser, the Spanish army had used single shot Remington rolling block rifles as its primary military long guns. These were chambered in 11.15x57mmR Spanish Remington. It is likely that some of these Remingtons were moldering in arsenals when the war broke out, the sheer number of stored rifles suggesting that many were old. The Remingtons would have been obsolete rifles of dubious effectiveness, particularly given the likely age of their black powder cartridges.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to rifles used by the armed forces, the paramilitary forces of Spain used carbines chambered for pistol rounds. Common in this role was a Spanish copy of the Model 1892 Winchester level action carbine, chambered in .44-40 Winchester and dubbed “El Tigre.” The paramilitary forces may also have been issued a bolt action carbine chambered in the 9x23mm Largo pistol cartridge, but records are unclear as to the date of its introduction. This was called the “Destroyer.” It is unclear whether paramilitary carbines were included in the total of 500,000 available rifles.

At the beginning of the civil war the Spanish army had about 3,000 light machine guns on strength. The principal weapon was the Hotchkiss Model 1922, a bipod-mounted magazine-fed gun chambered in 7mm Mauser. About 1,000 of these guns were retained by the Republicans, with the bulk of them going to the Insurgents.<sup>7</sup> The gun weighed about eighteen pounds and fired at a relatively low cyclic rate of 300 rounds per minute.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish military had also adopted the Madsen M1907 and M1922 as light machineguns, but I have found no information on how many of these guns were available at the outbreak of the war. The Madsen in general had an excellent reputation and was widely adopted by a number of countries. The Madsens were a bit heavier than the Hotchkiss guns and had a higher rate of fire.<sup>9</sup>

The Spanish military relied on another Hotchkiss design for its heavy machine gun--the venerable Hotchkiss Model 1914, also firing the 7mm Spanish Mauser round. This robust and reliable gun had served as the principal French heavy machine gun in the Great War. It fired at a cyclic rate of between 450 and 500 rounds per minute and weighed in at a hefty 116 pounds with its tripod. At the outset of the rebellion, the Republicans retained 628 of these guns and the Nationalists captured about 1,400.<sup>10</sup>

A number of pistols were in service with the Spanish military and para-military forces at the outbreak of civil war. The Spanish army had adopted the M1908 Bergmann Bayard in small numbers, then the M1912 and M1913 Campo Giro pistols, and finally the M1921 Astra 400 pistol. All of these were semi-automatic pistols chambered for a 9mm round that started as a proprietary round for the Bergmann Bayard pistols but was used in the other Spanish pistols as well and came to be known as 9mm Largo. It was, as the name implies, longer than most other types of 9mm rounds, although pistols designed for 9mm Largo could apparently fire shorter, more widely produced rounds (such as 9mm Parabellum) in a pinch. In addition to officially adopted weapons, a wide variety of other pistols undoubtedly found their way into the hands of Spanish soldiers, sailors, airmen, and police. Astra and Royal (another Spanish arms manufacturer) in particular made large semi-automatic pistols that resembled the Mauser C96 series in appearance. At least some of these were available with detachable shoulder stocks that converted them into a form of carbine. Some Spanish pistols were produced with the capacity for full automatic fire, and served as proto-submachine guns (or more properly, machine pistols).<sup>11</sup> Spanish pistol-makers also developed or copied more conventional submachine guns, with Star S135, RU35, and TN35 models all appearing in the Civil War despite not having been official issue in the Spanish army.<sup>12</sup>

One reason for the profusion of Spanish pistols was an extensive Spanish arms industry centered in the Basque region of northern Spain. This area had long been a center for steel and firearms manufacture. World War One had seen its manufacturing capacity expand as its factories filled French orders for pistols. The Spanish also undertook the domestic manufacture of Mauser rifles and Hotchkiss light and heavy machineguns.<sup>13</sup> Rifles and Hotchkiss heavy and light machineguns were produced at Oviedo, while La Coruña also saw the production of some

Hotchkiss light machineguns. After the Bergmann Bayard, all pistols officially adopted by the Spanish army were made in the Eibar region of Basque Spain.

The Republicans got only limited use from Spain’s arms manufacturing capacity. The army garrison in Oviedo sided with the Nationalists and withstood a four month siege before being relieved by the Insurgent forces.<sup>14</sup> La Coruña fell within the Nationalist zone at the start of the war. The Basques declared for the Republic, but their enclave (together with Santander and Asturias) was quickly isolated from the rest of Republican Spain. They fought their war in isolation until the Nationalist forces overwhelmed them in the autumn of 1937. While the Republicans set up arms production centers in the main Republican zones, which manufactured (at least) Mauser Model 1916 short rifles, copies of the MP 28 submachinegun in 9mm Largo (dubbed the “Naranjero”), and a variety of pistols, these plants suffered from at least the usual amount of disruption attendant to establishing any new industry.<sup>15</sup> The Nationalists captured more arms at the outset of their revolt, had more readily available foreign supply sources, and eventually occupied all of Spain’s pre-war arms producing areas.

*The Need for Guns*

When the rival factions considered their need for arms, how many guns did they need? Sources vary as to the number of men immediately available to each side. The table summarizes the ranges:<sup>16</sup>

	Mainland Army	Army of Africa	Paramilitary Forces	Totals
To the	34,000 to 57,000	None	33,000 to 50,000	67,000 to

Republicans				107,000
To the Nationalists	27,000 to 60,000	30,000 to 40,000	29,000 to 50,000	86,000 to 150,000

The high numbers for the mainland army are probably inflated by counting conscripts who had been called up but immediately placed on furlough.<sup>17</sup> One source gives a total army strength (apart from the Army of Africa) of 90,000 men, with 25,000 of the total on leave.<sup>18</sup> Of the four sources consulted, three give numbers at the low end of the range for the paramilitary forces. Thus, the lower numbers are likely the most accurate. The paramilitary forces included the *carabinero* border guards, the largely rural Civil Guard and the largely urban Assault Guard. All three were reasonably well drilled, and so likely to be more effective than the raw conscripts in the army. The Army of Africa exerted an outsize influence; most of its strength was found in the *banderas* of the Spanish Foreign Legion and the *tabors* of the Moroccan *Regulares*, better trained and better armed than any other force on either side.

On paper, it would seem that there were sufficient weapons to equip the Insurgents at their likely initial strengths. The Nationalist Army of Africa was already well-equipped, while the Nationalist forces in peninsular Spain could draw on an arsenal of up to 370,000 rifles, 2,000 light machineguns, and 1,400 heavy machineguns to equip no more than 110,000 men of the army and paramilitary forces plus an unknown number of Falangist and Carlist militiamen. Even if half the available rifles were unserviceable or were obsolete black powder single-shot weapons, 185,000 Mausers should have sufficed to equip the initial Nationalist forces.

The Republicans clearly faced an arms shortfall. After losing some arms to the Insurgents at the very start of hostilities, they were left with about 130,000 rifles, 1,000 light machineguns,

and 600 heavy machineguns. The organized military and paramilitary forces in the Republican zone amounted to between 87,000 and 150,000 men, but many of these units quickly disintegrated in conflicting loyalties and the upheavals that accompanied the Insurgent coup and the Republican quasi-revolution.<sup>19</sup> So unlike the Nationalists, the Republicans found themselves building an army based not on existing units but instead on newly formed militias.<sup>20</sup> By autumn 1936, this process yielded perhaps 150,000 men: 90,000 on the Madrid front, 30,000 in Aragon, and 30,000 in the Basque provinces.<sup>21</sup> Assuming again that half the available rifles were obsolete or unserviceable, and compounding this with considerable chaos attendant to the distribution of arms to the various militias, the Loyalists were quickly scrambling for guns.

Estimating the number of small arms needed to equip the Nationalist and Republican forces is not straightforward. Requirements had to take into account wastage and breakage, but on the other hand not every man needed a rifle. Supply troops, support troops, and even fighting arms such as artillery could make do with a reduced scale of rifle issuance, or rely solely on pistols. Fewer than three-quarters of the men in a 1939 British infantry division had a rifle, while fewer than half the men in a 1940 U.S. infantry division did.<sup>22</sup> The same phenomenon can be seen in the official establishment of the standard Republican “mixed brigade,” which has 2,200 rifles for 3,850 men.<sup>23</sup> The two countervailing forces--wastage versus limiting rifle issuance--probably come close to canceling each other out in the short run, with wastage predominating in the long run. Even with a goal of a rifle for every other man the Republic would have found itself in immediate need of rifles, while the rapid expansion of the Nationalist army soon created a similar need on the Insurgent side.

Both the Republican and the Nationalist forces were to grow quickly and substantially. By the end of 1936, the Nationalist army had close to 200,000 men on strength and was

continuing to expand, reaching a strength of 300,000 by March of 1937 and 450,000 by the beginning of 1938.<sup>24</sup> By the start of 1937, the Republicans had enrolled 320,000 men, growing to 360,000 by March of that year and 500,000 in June, dropping to 424,000 by July (according to a Nationalist intelligence estimate), “theoretically” attained a strength of 750,000 by the beginning of 1938, and then falling to 690,000 in May of that year.<sup>25</sup> It seems that a total of two million men served in the war, with the numbers fairly evenly split between the Nationalists and the Republicans.<sup>26</sup> Of the estimated Loyalist strength of 424,000 men in July 1937, the Nationalists believed that about 374,000 were at the fronts.<sup>27</sup> This gives a sense of the numbers of rear area troops that could make do with obsolete weapons and reduced scales of armament.

On both sides, there was also a distinct political element to the demand for arms. For the Insurgents, Falangists and Carlists clamored for arms for their recruits, even going so far as to make independent arms purchases. Pressure was even more extreme for the Republicans, with socialist, communist, and anarchist militias all competing for guns domestically and abroad while the Basques, cut off from the rest of the Republic, sought to supply their needs separately. These competing demands on both sides created more pressure for arms purchases while complicating the procurement picture for both armies.

While lack of rifles was a headline item, both sides also needed other small arms. World War I had taught the importance of machineguns and automatic rifles in infantry combat, and the Spanish Civil War was to be an infantry war. While both the Nationalists and the Republicans managed to capture a portion of Spain’s existing stocks of these automatic weapons, the Insurgents came out well ahead of the Republic. Turning again to the equipment tables for the 1939 British infantry division and the 1940 U.S. infantry division, these units had between four and five automatic weapons per 100 men.<sup>28</sup> Applying the same scale of equipment to the



contending forces, the Nationalists would have begun the war with enough automatic weapons to equip at least 68,000 men (plus, presumably, the automatic weapons already equipping the Army of Africa), while the Nationalists had sufficient for only 32,000 men. This somewhat understates the numbers of men that could be equipped, as both sides likely settled for a lower proportion of auto weapons per troops than did the British or the Americans and as troops not in front lines required few if any of these scarce guns. Evidence of this sort of economizing can be seen in the official establishment of the standard Republican “mixed brigade,” which had a bit more than three automatic weapons per hundred men.<sup>29</sup> Of course, this calculation also overstates numbers of men that could be equipped to the extent that the some of the guns were unserviceable or required repairs. But even with these adjustments, it is clear that the Nationalists would want more automatic rifles and machine guns to equip their expanding forces, while the Republicans were from the start perilously close to forming units that were merely men with rifles devoid of meaningful automatic weapons support.

### *Republican Guns: in General*

The Republicans had to search far afield for weapons. Among the European powers, the Czechs, Poles, Greeks, and Russians all played roles in getting guns to the Republic. All insisted that they be paid, and at least the Poles and the Russians took the opportunity to dump superannuated weapons on the Loyalists. The British government was at best indifferent to the Republic, and while the French Popular Front government was in sympathy with the Loyalists, fear of alienating the British and a militant rightist resistance to any support for Spanish socialists (or worse, communists and anarchists) greatly hampered French attempts to provide

aid. This British indifference and French paralysis was soon embodied in a non-intervention convention signed by twenty-seven European nations.<sup>30</sup> The Non-Intervention Committee did little to stop those nations that were determined to send arms to Spain from doing so. The arms exporters either invented fictitious cover stories for their exports or, more simply, just ignored the Committee. Only the Mexican government offered immediate and unconditional support, but its aid was perforce limited by its resources.

Mexican support was particularly welcome because the Mexican army used the same small arms cartridge as the Spanish: the 7mm Spanish Mauser round. The Spanish liner *Magellanes* brought 20,000 Mexican Mausers to the Spanish port of Cartagena on 2 September 1936. Like Spain, Mexico had adopted a variety of Mauser types, so the delivered weapons could have been Model 1895 rifles, Model 1895 carbines, Model 1902 rifles, Model 1907 Steyr rifles, Model 1910 rifles, Model 1910 carbines, Model 1912 Steyr rifles (although it is unclear how many of these rifles were delivered to Mexico), Model 1912 Steyr short rifles, Model 1924 FN short rifles, Model 1924 FN carbines, Model 12/33 Czech carbines, or Model 1936 short rifles. It would have been fitting for the Mexicans to send Model 1895 rifles, as at least some had been made at Oviedo in Spain.<sup>31</sup> A second shipment of Mexican arms arrived at Santander on 13 January 1937 in the *Sil*: 2,000 more Mauser rifles and 100 Mendoza light machineguns. The Mendozas were probably Model C1934 models, bipod mounted weapons with 20 round detachable magazines.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Mexico sent current production machineguns rather than older weapons in its arsenals suggests that it may have sent newer Mauser models as well. Other Mexican small arms may have been sent to Spain, but I have found no record of them.

*Republican Guns: the Polish Connection*

While the Polish government was politically more in sympathy with the Nationalists than the Republic, that did not stop it from selling arms to the Loyalists. The records show that the Poles delivered more than 100,000 small arms to the Republic. Polish deliveries began well, with the *Azteca* bringing in 200 wz. 28 light machineguns and 19,300 wz. 29 Mauser rifles in September 1936. These were all weapons of recent manufacture, chambered for the 7.92mm Mauser round.<sup>33</sup> The wz. 28s were Polish versions of the Browning Automatic Rifle, modified to be made more suitable for use as a light machine gun. The next shipment, which arrived in the *Hillfern* in the Basque enclave at Bilbao on 7 November 1936, was more of a hodge-podge. It consisted of 10,000 rifles, 167 submachine guns, and 92 heavy machineguns. The rifles (or carbines, the records being unclear) were Mannlicher M1895s, the standard Austro-Hungarian rifle of World War I. While many of these were converted after the First World War to fire an 8x56mmR spitzer cartridge, the shipped guns were probably in their original caliber of 8x50mmR Mannlicher. The submachineguns were apparently Maxim M08/18s in 9mm Parabellum, odd looking contraptions that fed from a box containing eight ten round clips. The heavy machineguns were described as Schwarzlose M07/12 models--the standard water-cooled heavy machinegun of the Austro-Hungarian army--oddly, sourced from the Czechs. The Czechs had converted many of these guns to 7.92 mm Mauser and labeled them M07/24 models, but the shipped guns were apparently unconverted and so would have used the 8x50mmR Mannlicher round.<sup>34</sup> The *Hillfern* shipment, and many of the Polish shipments that followed, reflected the Poles unloading many of the weapons that came into their hands in the chaos following World War I. The Poles got German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, French, and even British arms in the immediate post-war period. By the 1930s, they had embarked on a rearmament program and

were quite happy to sell their old weapons to the Loyalists. Of the 100,000 guns that originated with the Poles, only slightly more than a quarter came from recent Polish production.

After the *Hillfern*, the Poles made eight more arms shipments to the Nationalists. The *Warmond* arrived at Alicante on 17 December 1936 with a cargo of 100 Vickers aircraft machineguns in .303 British, 3,000 Mannlicher M1895 rifles, and 10,000 more rifles that might have been Mausers but which were probably French Lebel rifles in 8mm Lebel.<sup>35</sup> On 2 February 1937 the *Saromid* arrived at the same port carrying 7,000 more M1895 Mannlicher rifles, 580 Maxim M10/28 heavy machineguns (Russian M1910 Maxim models rechambered by the Poles for the 7.92mm Mauser round), and 2,000 (or 2,600) Mauser M1890 rifles. The latter were a bit of a mystery, being Turkish rifles originally chambered in 7.65x53mm and possibly converted to 7.92mm. How they came to the Poles is unknown.<sup>36</sup> Next in was the *Rambon*, arriving in February with 1,272 M10/28 heavy machineguns.<sup>37</sup> After the *Rambon* came the *Heine* in March with 400 Lewis light machineguns in .303 British. These guns may have been delivered to Bordeaux for further shipment to Spain, or perhaps to Gijón.<sup>38</sup> Then followed in March two shipments of French Berthier rifles in 8mm Lebel: the *Morna* bringing 14,179 rifles and the *Sarkani* bringing 14,881.<sup>39</sup> These rifles may have been some of the Berthiers shipped by the French to the Russians, in which case they would have been three-shot Fusil Mle 1907/15s.<sup>40</sup>

The final Polish shipments arrived in April and August of 1937. In April, the *Tinge* brought another 8,040 Berthier rifles and 7,000 Mannlicher M1888-90 and M1895 rifles.<sup>41</sup> The M88-90 rifles were originally chambered for an 8mm semi-smokeless round that the Austrian army used for only three years before replacing it with a smokeless round. The later smokeless round would chamber in these rifles, but its use would gradually batter them into ineffectiveness. In August, the *Al Racou* brought to Bassens, Bordeaux a nicely balanced cargo of 5,800 wz. 29

rifles, 225 wz. 28 light machineguns, and 48 wz. 30 heavy machineguns. The wz.30s were Polish produced versions of the U.S. M1917 machinegun, chambered for 7.92mm Mauser.<sup>42</sup> These are all of the Polish arms shipments for which I could find solid evidence, but there may have been others. In particular, the Wikipedia entry for the wz. 30 machinegun cites a source for the proposition that 1,100 of these guns were ultimately sent to the Republicans.

While only about a quarter of the small arms delivered by the Poles were recent production, the remainder were not necessarily useless. The Mannlicher M1888-90s were the worst of the lot, but less than 7,000 of these were recorded as coming from the Poles. The Mannlicher M1895s fired an obsolescent round, but the same model had soldiered through the Great War with the Austro-Hungarians. The Lebel's were an old design but still reasonably effective, while the Berthiers would continue in service with French security forces beyond the Second World War. All this assumes of course, that the older weapons were delivered in a serviceable condition. Assuming this was so, the greatest problem with the Polish shipments was the diversity of ammunition required for these guns. Even leaving aside the Mannlicher M1888-90s and the Lewis guns, the French rifles required 8mm Lebel cartridges, the M1895s needed another 8mm round, the Polish arms were standardized for 7.92mm Mauser. While all the guns were shipped with some ammunition, stocks were limited and getting the right ammo to the right guns at the right time was certain to be a logistical nightmare. The nightmare was not helped by the Republic's need to build a supply system from the ground up while fighting a war. Right from the start, a single Loyalist brigade could find itself with rifles requiring five or six different types of ammunition.<sup>43</sup>

*Republican Guns: the Soviet Connection*

Adding to the ammunition nightmare was the wide variety of arms delivered by Russia. The Soviet Union was an early supporter of the Republic and delivered the bulk of the small arms that the Loyalists received: a recorded total of almost 400,000 guns.<sup>44</sup> But like the Poles, the Russians took the opportunity to unload all sorts of odds and ends that had stacked up in their armories. A bit more than a quarter of the arms that the Russians delivered to Spain fell into the “odds and ends” category.

The Russians delivered small arms in at least 22 and perhaps as many as 26 voyages, starting in September 1936 and ending in February 1939. At the outset, they shipped arms from the Baltic and the Black Sea to Spanish ports, although the increasingly effective Nationalist naval blockade eventually resulted in the Baltic shipments being landed in Bordeaux and the Black Sea shipments in Marseilles. That the Soviet arms shipments made up the bulk of the small arms received by the Republic was more than just a reflection of leftist solidarity, as the bulk of the Spanish gold reserves were moved to Russia early in the war. The Russians were paid for all the arms they shipped, and their custody of the Spanish gold put them first in line for payment and so first in line as suppliers.

The first Russian shipment truly was a mishmash. It arrived from Feodosia in the *Campeche* on 4 October 1936. *Campeche's* holds contained nine different types of small arms: 20,350 Vetterli, Arisaka, Lebel, and Gras-Kropatschek rifles, 200 Maxim MG 08/15 and Hotchkiss M1909 light machine guns, and 350 St. Étienne Mle 1907, Colt M1895, and Vickers heavy machineguns.<sup>45</sup> The Vetterlis were relics, although their details are vague. Howson says that they were single-shot weapons made by the Italians for the Turks and captured by the Russians.<sup>46</sup> But they may also have been Vetterli-Vitalis sent from Italy to Russia during the

Great War.<sup>47</sup> These were single shot weapons adapted to use a four round box magazine. In either case, the rifles would have fired a 10.4x47mmR cartridge loaded with either black or smokeless powder. And in either case, the rifles would have been close to worthless as front line weapons. The Arisakas could also have been a variety of types from a few different sources. The Japanese sold Type 30, Type 35, and Type 38 rifles to the Russians, all chambered in 6.5x50mm, as well as smaller quantities of Type 38 rifles and carbine left over from a Mexican order. The Mexican rifles (dubbed Model 13s) were chambered in 7mm Spanish, and so would have been logical guns to send on to the Republicans if the Soviets still had them. Any 7mm Arisakas found in Spain would most likely come from Russia, as few of these guns were delivered to Mexico.<sup>48</sup> Finally, the French bought a number of Type 30 and Type 38 Arisakas at the start of World War One. These wound up in British hands, and then were shipped to the Russians. They were chambered for the standard 6.5mm Arisaka round.<sup>49</sup> The Lebel were probably the standard French infantry arm in 8mm Lebel, while the Gras-Kropatscheks (Mle 1878, Mle 78/84 or Mle 1885) were French Gras single-shot rifle modified by having a tube magazine grafted on. They fired an 11x58mmR black powder round.<sup>50</sup> Of the light machineguns the MG 08/15s were cumbersome but sturdy water-cooled German guns while the Hotchkiss guns were air-cooled weapons of a type which had served with the French in 8mm Lebel, the British in .303 and the Americans in .30-06. Any of these versions could have come into Russian hands, but it is unclear which version or versions of the gun the Loyalists got. The Colt heavy machineguns were wartime expedients purchased by the Tsarist army and the St. Étienne had seen limited use by the French before being rapidly phased out in favor of the superior Hotchkiss gun.

Next in with small arms was the *Andreev*, arriving at Bilbao from Leningrad on 22 October 1936. She brought another mix of weapons: 200 Lewis light machineguns in .303

British, 9,000 Winchester M1895s in 7.62x54mmR (the standard Russian and Soviet caliber), and a mixed lot of 6,655 Vetterlis, Gras, Gras-Kropatscheks, and Lebel.<sup>51</sup> The Winchesters at least started life as well-made and sturdy weapons, although their condition upon arriving in Spain is open to speculation. They were also the first of many small arms delivered in the 7.62mm Russian caliber. The Gras rifles could have been shipped in their original 11mm single-shot black powder configuration, or as rebarrelled guns capable of firing (briefly) the more powerful 8mm Lebel smokeless round.

The next two ships with Russian small arms called at Cartagena. The *Kursk* brought in another 9,000 Winchester Model 1895s and the first modern Russian small arms: 150 Degtyarev DP light machineguns. The DPs were the current Soviet light machineguns: air-cooled weapons firing 550 7.62mm rounds per minute from 47 round pan magazines and weighing it at 20 1/2 pounds.<sup>52</sup> *Kursk* arrived on 25 October.<sup>53</sup> The *Blagoev* came in the next day, with 200 more Lewis light machineguns and 200 Maxim heavy machineguns, probably standard Russian M1910 models.<sup>54</sup> These were the heavyweights of Maxim machinegun variants, weighing more than 150 pounds with their wheeled and shielded carriages. They fired the Russian 7.62mm round at a cyclic rate of 550 rounds per minute.<sup>55</sup>

The Soviets continued to clean out their arsenals with the next two deliveries of small arms. The *Artza Mendi* arrived at Cartagena on 6 November with 300 Colt-Browning M1895/14 heavy machineguns (likely in 7.62mm Russian), 1,000 Lee-Enfield rifles in .303 British, and 900 Lebel.<sup>56</sup> The *Cabo Palos* followed on 29 November with another 900 Colt-Browning M1895/14 heavy machineguns, and 400 French Chauchat automatic rifles. The latter were World War One era weapons, magazine-fed and chambered in 8mm Lebel. She also carried 1,920 “assorted”



rifles, probably odds and ends of foreign weapons, 600 heavy machineguns of an unknown type, and 1,010 pistols.<sup>57</sup>

The next two shipments marked the first Mosin Nagant rifles to reach Spain. Over the course of the war, deliveries of these rifles--the standard rifle of both Tsarist and Soviet forces--would total more than 250,000.<sup>58</sup> The first two shipments arrived at Cartagena on 4 and 6 January. The *Sil-2* brought 25,500 rifles on the first date; the *Mar Blanco* arrived with another 24,580 two days later. In both cases, M1891 rifles were shipped.<sup>59</sup> These had continued in production into the 1920s, and were only superseded by a shortened and refined version in the 1930. They were, of course, chambered in 7.62mm Russian.

While the Russians had now shipped their standard rifles, light machineguns, and heavy machineguns, they were not quite done sweeping out their arsenals. The *Elaie* (or *Elsie*) brought 362 Colt-Browning M1895/14s to Alicante on 18 January 1937, marking the last shipment in which old non-Russian small arms are identified. The *Darro* arrived at Cartagena in March with 20,700 rifles (probably Mosin Nagants), 1,646 DP LMGs, and 277 HMGs.<sup>60</sup> Details on the next shipment are vague. The ship was the *Vaga*, which arrived in March or April. The cargo was 25,000 Mauser rifles and 50 million cartridges, bought in Paris. Howson believes that the Russians characterized the shipment as part of their aid to the Republic, despite the arms being bought elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

Two shipments arrived in May. On the 1st, the *Cabo San Tomé* brought in 1,000 Maxim-Tokarev light machineguns, 601 Maxim M1910 heavy machineguns, and 25,000 Mosins.<sup>62</sup> The Maxim-Tokarevs were Soviet Russia's first attempt at a light machinegun. It was an awkward looking belt-fed air-cooled weapon with an action based on the Maxim's, chambered in 7.62mm Russian and weighing 28 pounds without ammunition. May 7th saw the arrival of the *Cabo*

*Palos* with 15,000 Mosin Nagant M1891s, 10,000 “foreign rifles,” and a paltry ten Maxim heavy machineguns and three Degtyarev DT tank machineguns.<sup>63</sup> There was then a three month gap until the *Cabo San Agustín* arrived on 10 August with 39,550 Mosin M1891s, 10,450 Mosin Nagant 91/30s, 2,000 Maxim-Tokarevs, and 1,007 Maxim heavy machineguns.<sup>64</sup> This shipment marked the first receipt by the Loyalists of the M91/30 Mosin, then the current Russian service rifle. It was also the last Russian small arms shipment directly to Spain, as the Nationalist naval blockade forced all subsequent shipments to sail to French ports.

Howson records the details of six voyages from Russia to French ports. The *Guilvenec* arrived in Bassens, Bordeaux on Christmas Day, 1937. She brought 25 heavy machineguns and 500 light machineguns.<sup>65</sup> The *Capo San Agustín* made a final run to Marseilles with eight Maxim heavy machineguns, 20 rifles and 20 pistols, among other cargo.<sup>66</sup> The *Bonafacio* brought arms from Murmansk to Bassens, arriving on 7 February 1938. She brought 26,500 M1891/30s, 1,350 Degtyarev DP and DT light machineguns, 750 Maxim-Tokarev light machineguns, 50 Maxim heavy machineguns, and 8,400 rifles described only as “Type M34.”<sup>67</sup> The *Ain el Turk* arrived at Bassens on 26 February 1938 with 40,100 M1891/30 rifles.<sup>68</sup> The *Gravelines* arrived on 13 March with an unusual cargo of 1,000 Czech machineguns and 50,000 Czech rifles, together with Soviet tanks and bombers.<sup>69</sup> The Czech arms had been purchased separately by the Loyalists, but were then mired in attempts to export them with the connivance of first Turkish and then the Bolivian officials. The Russians at first refused but ultimately agreed to provide the “cover” needed for the Czechs to ship the guns without appearing to violate the Non-Intervention Agreement, and so they were ultimately sent to Spain with other Russian material.<sup>70</sup> The rifles were apparently vz. 24 Mauser models in 7.92mm.<sup>71</sup> The type of machinegun is unknown, but the Czechs at this time were exporting many ZB26 and ZB30 light

machineguns, the progenitors of the famous Bren gun and the standard Spanish light machinegun after the end of the civil war. The *Bonafacio* followed on 5 April with an additional 1,000 Czech machineguns.<sup>72</sup>

Three to seven additional voyages took place from Murmansk to Bassens from December 1938 through February 1939, but I do not have their details. According to Howson, 35,000 M1985/30 rifles, 2,000 DPs, and 772 Maxim heavy machineguns were delivered through these voyages and not returned to Russia, although the weapons delivered in 1939 would not have arrived in time to be useful to the Loyalists.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Republican Guns: Other Sources*

While a majority of the Loyalist guns came from the Poles and the Russians, about 125,000 came from other sources. As has been seen, Mexico contributed 22,000 Mauser rifles and 100 Mendoza automatic rifles. The Czechs sold arms directly to the Spanish anarchists, with the *Bramhill* bringing 19,000 rifles, 101 machineguns, and 4,000 pistols into Alicante on 1 October 1936. The rifles and LMGs were in 7.92mm.<sup>74</sup> The precise types of these weapons are unknown, although the Czechs were doing a lively business at the time in vz. 24 Mauser short rifles and ZB26 and ZB30 light machineguns. The Belgians sold directly to the Basques, with the Belgian *Alice* leaving Antwerp on 22 September 1936 with 6,000 Mauser rifles and 100 machineguns, then transferring the cargo to the Basque *Iciar* for delivery to Bilbao.<sup>75</sup> A much greater quantity of arms was purchased in Belgium for the Republic, but never got to Spain.<sup>76</sup>

Various small arms shipments from the Baltic but not sourced from the Poles or the Russians also found their way to Spain. The *Bess* (or *Bass*) carried 5,000 British .303 rifles to

Bilbao in October 1936. The *Bjornoy* (or *Bjornboy*) carried 21,000 British .303 rifles to Cartagena in the same month. The British rifles were probably Lee-Enfields, a type used by the Lithuanian army, but may also have been Ross or Pattern 1914 rifles. The *Cieszyn* brought 2,930 old Russian rifles, probably M1895 Nagants bought from the Finns, in January 1937.<sup>77</sup> The *Dobesa* brought 91 machineguns and a shipment of 7.92mm and 7mm ammunition from Gdynia to Alicante, arriving on 14 January 1937.<sup>78</sup> The *Ploubazlanec* also departed from Tallinn in the Baltic, but any small arms she carried probably originated in Paraguay. The Paraguayan purchase included 10 Vickers heavy machineguns, 75 Maxim heavy machineguns, 233 automatic rifles (probably Vickers VBs), and 7,119 Mauser rifles. All were chambered in 7.65mm. It is unclear how many of these weapons actually made it aboard the ship; she arrived at Bassens at the end of September 1937.<sup>79</sup> The Paraguayans used at least nine different types of Mauser rifles during this period, in addition to capturing many more from the Bolivians in the Chaco War. Perhaps the rifles shipped were Spanish-made Model 1927 rifles and short rifles, which the Paraguayan soldiers loathed.<sup>80</sup> Howson says that the deal was brokered by the same arms dealer who sold arms to the Paraguayans in anticipation of the Chaco War, and that the dealer arranged for the same arms to be sold to the Republicans. If true, that would make them some version of the vz. 24 Czech Mauser short rifle and possibly some of the 7,000 Model 1889 Belgian Mausers that the Paraguayans had picked up in 1930.<sup>81</sup>

The final small arms shipment for which records exist is that of the *Ibai*, which sailed from Veracruz to Le Havre, arriving on 13 January 1938. Her cargo has been sourced in Japan and Bolivia, consisting of “a few thousand Japanese rifles,” 15,000 Bolivian Mauser rifles in 7.65mm, and 111 Bolivian Vickers heavy machineguns in the same caliber.<sup>82</sup> As with other Central and South American countries, Bolivia was an early adopter of the Mauser rifle. The

Bolivians procured 15,000 Mausers from the Argentinians before the turn of the century, 5,000 Mauser rifles and carbines from Germany before the start of the First World War, many thousands of vz. 24 short rifles from the Czechs, and some Modell 33 export Mausers from Germany.<sup>83</sup> The Bolivians probably viewed the Spanish sale as an opportunity to trade old guns for cash, but whether enough of the 20,000 pre-war Mausers survived to make up a sales lot of 15,000 rifles is open to question. Presumably, any shortfall would have been made up with vz. 24s, thus giving the Loyalists the same model of Mauser chambered in two different calibers. The precise types of Japanese rifles delivered also remains a mystery. They did come from Japan rather than Mexico, so they were not the few 7mm Model 13s that Mexico had received before World War I. And the 7mm Model 13s that remained undelivered apparently went to Russia with the bulk of Japan's 6.5mm Type 30 rifles and carbines. The shipped rifles may have been leftover Type 30s or Type 35s, or possibly Type 38s.

*Summary: Republicans*

More detailed information exists for the Republicans than for the Nationalists, thanks primarily to Howson and his sources. Still, Howson's lists are certainly not all-inclusive, and he acknowledges the difficulties of reconciling the various numbers given by different sources. Further, his sources are often vague as to the precise types of rifles shipped, while other sources shed little light on this. The following excerpt from a book on the American Abraham Lincoln Battalion illustrates the difficulties of tracking down information about weapon types.

In the chill February evening, they lined up before a supply truck and unloaded heavy coffin-shaped boxes. They broke them open and pulled out Remington-style rifles,

each wrapped in Mexico City newspapers and oozing cosmoline. . . .The rifles were all of a kind, except that the barrels of some were stamped with the Czarist spread-eagle, others with the Soviet hammer and sickle. The latter were several inches shorter and a few ounces lighter, but their bolts were apt to jam when the metal overheated. (Some rifles were stamped “Made in Connecticut.”) Because of their reputed origin--made in the United States, sent to the Czar in 1914, copied and fabricated by Bolshevik artisans, sold to Mexico for revolutionary work, and donated to the Spanish Republic, they were christened *mexicanskis*.<sup>84</sup>

What to make of this? The paragraph probably refers to Mosin Nagant rifles manufactured in the United States for the Czarist army. A few hundred thousand of these guns were shipped to Russia before the Russian Revolution disrupted further deliveries. These guns were made by Remington and Westinghouse, and would have had a Czarist eagle crest. The Westinghouse guns, at least, bore the legend “New England. ” They were not, however, Remington-style guns, being copies of the standard Russian infantry rifle of the day. The reference to Mexican newspapers used to wrap them is a mystery. I can find no indication that any of these guns went to Mexico (which was using Mausers in 7mm as the standard service rifle) or that any rifles other than Mausers went from Mexico to Spain. The story of the Mexican newspapers may come from another issuance of weapons from Mexico. Equally puzzling is the reference to the shorter guns and the hammer and sickle markings. Those certainly sound like Mosin Nagant 91/30 short rifles, the standard Soviet infantry arm, but according to Howson none of these rifles reached Spain until after the incident described above. Again, the references to Soviet markings and shorter rifles may have resulted from conflating this incident with another issuance of rifles. Such are the perils of trying to determine the types of weapons in use in Spain.

The numbers below are based on the detailed cargo manifests provided in *Arms for Spain* and on the list in that book of foreign rifles sent from Russian to Spain.

Model	Number	Probability	Notes
Spanish Model 1893 Rifles and Model 1916 Short Rifles	Unknown	Certain	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces. Photos show these guns in use. M1916 produced by both sides during war. <sup>85</sup>
Spanish Modified Gewehr 98 Rifles	Unknown	Likely	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces.
Spanish Carbines: Model 1893, Model 1895, Model 1916	Unknown	Certain	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces. Less numerous than rifles, but photos show some in use.
Spanish “El Tigre”	Unknown	Likely	Equipping paramilitary forces.
Standard Modell 1933 Short Rifles	Unknown	Likely	Bought by Spanish government before war, in 7mm.
Vetterli Rifles	13,357	Likely	Probably used in rear areas only. See above on precise type of rifle.
Gras Rifles	10,000	Likely	Probably used in rear areas only. See above on precise type of rifle.
Gras-Kropatschek Rifles	1,821	Likely	Probably used in rear areas only. See above on precise type of rifle.
Mannlicher M88-90 Rifles	7,000 or less	Possible	Required unique ammunition. Mention of “Steyr” rifles being used to train the

			Abraham Lincoln battalion of American volunteers. <sup>86</sup>
Mannlicher M1895 Rifles and Carbines	20,000 or more	Likely	Mention of “Steyr” rifles being used to train the Abraham Lincoln battalion of American volunteers. <sup>87</sup>
Lebel Rifles	11,242	Possible	
Arisakas: Type 30 Rifles and Carbines, Type 35 Rifles, Type 38 Rifles and Carbines, Model 13 Mexican Rifles	Unknown, up to 10,000 from Russia	Possible	Up to 10,000 from Russia, plus “a few thousand” from Japan. Precise types unknown. Some or all of the rifles from Russia may have been Model 13s from Mexican order, based on Type 38 and chambered for 7mm Spanish.
Ross Rifles	Up to 10,000	Possible	Numbers in <i>Arms for Spain</i> suggest that combined total of Arisakas and Ross rifles from Russia was slightly less than 10,000. Mention of Ross rifles being used to train the Abraham Lincoln battalion of American volunteers. <sup>88</sup>
Lee-Enfield Rifles	3,202 or more	Possible	One posed photo of Communist youth militia member with Lee-Enfield, but small numbers and unique ammunition may have limited use. Precise types unknown.



Berthier Rifles	37,400	Likely	Precise types unknown. Polish source.
Winchester M1895 Rifles	18,000	Likely	May have been only 9,000.
Mexican Mausers	22,000	Likely	20,000 were likely Model 1895s or Model 1902s. 2,000 may have been of later types.
Bolivian Mausers	15,000	Possible	Some 7.65mm Mausers captured by Nationalists.
Paraguayan Mausers	7,119	Possible	Some 7.65mm Mausers captured by Nationalists.
Model 1890 Turkish Mausers	2,000 to 2,600	Possible	Some 7.65mm Mausers captured by Nationalists.
Polish wz. 29 Mausers	25,100	Likely	
Czech Mausers	50,000	Likely	Probably vz. 24s, the most commonly exported Czech Mausers.
Other Mausers	12,000 to 37,000	Likely	Types unknown. Not clear if 25,000 of these were delivered. 6,000 from Russia.
Unknown Rifles	8,400	Unknown	Russian delivery, described as “M34” rifles.
M1891 Mosin Nagant Rifles	150,530	Certain	
M91/30 Mosin Nagant Rifles	112,500	Certain	Includes some rifles delivered to French ports and not returned to Russia.
Chauchat Automatic	400	Likely	Although one report that they were rapidly

Rifles			discarded. <sup>89</sup>
Mendoza M1934 Light Machineguns	100	Likely	
Vickers-Berthier VB Light Machineguns	233	Possible	Unclear if these were delivered.
Polish wz. 28 Light Machineguns	425	Likely	
Lewis Light Machineguns	800	Possible	
Czech Machineguns	2,101	Certain	ZB 26 and ZB 30 were most widely exported models of Czech machineguns, and Spanish army adopted a version of the ZB 26 after the war. ZB 53 heavy machineguns may also have been shipped. <sup>90</sup> Photo shows ZB 26 or ZB 30 in Republican hands.
Maxim-Tokarev Light Machineguns	3,750	Certain	Photo shows Maxim-Tokarev on a barricade. Number shipped may have been all the Maxim-Tokarevs in Soviet arsenals.
DP and DT Light Machineguns	5,156	Certain	More than 3,796 were DPs.
Unknown light	500	Likely	Probably Maxim-Tokarevs, DPs or DTs,

machineguns			being a Russian shipment.
Hotchkiss M1909 Light Machineguns	Unknown	Possible	These and the MG 08/15s totaled 200 guns.
Maxim MG 08/15 Light Machineguns	Unknown	Possible	These and the Hotchkiss M1909s totaled 200 guns.
Hotchkiss M1922 Light Machineguns	1,000 or more	Likely	Standard weapon for Spanish armed forces.
Madsen M1907 and M1922 Light Machineguns	Unknown	Possible	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces.
Paraguayan Vickers Heavy Machineguns	10	Possible	Unclear if these were delivered.
Paraguayan Maxim Heavy Machineguns	75	Possible	Unclear if these were delivered.
Polish wz.30 Heavy Machineguns	48	Possible	
Schwarzlose M.07/12 Heavy Machineguns	92	Possible	
Bolivian Vickers Heavy Machineguns	111	Possible	
Hotchkiss Model 1914 Heavy Machineguns	628 or more	Likely	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces.

Colt M1895 and M1895/1914 Heavy Machineguns	More than 1,562	Likely	Some of these found their way to the Basques. <sup>91</sup>
Saint-Étienne M1907 Heavy Machineguns	Unknown	Certain	Account that these were used by the British contingent of the international brigades (and quickly discarded). <sup>92</sup>
Vickers Heavy Machineguns	Unknown	Possible	These, the Saint-Étiennes, and some Colts arrived in a shipment of 350 heavy machineguns.
Polish M10/28 Heavy Machineguns	1,852	Likely	
Russian Maxim Heavy Machineguns	2,641	Likely	Model not specifically identified, but most likely M1910s.
Unknown Russian Heavy Machineguns	902	Likely	The Russians delivered a further 902 heavy machineguns without specifying their type. They were probably M1910s or M1895/1914s.
Maxim M08/18 Submachine Guns	167	Possible	
Bergmann MP 18 Submachine Guns	At least 80	Likely	Very likely that more than 80 were received.
Erma EMP Submachine Guns	At least 3,250	Certain	Number surrendered to French by Spanish refugees at end of war. Source unknown.

Spanish-made Submachine Guns: S135, RU35, TN35, Naranjero	Unknown	Certain	The Naranjero was the Spanish made copy of the MP 28.
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In addition, the Loyalists imported at least 16,530 pistols in the course of the war, while manufacturing many pistols and machine pistols internally. Total deliveries (based on Howson's detailed voyage manifests) amounted to almost 650,000 small arms, of which more than 600,000 were rifles, about 14,000 were light machineguns, and about 7,500 were heavy machineguns. This is in addition to the arms that the Republicans managed to produce domestically, and likely does not include all imported arms. The Russians accounted for the bulk of these deliveries--about 350,000 weapons--while M1891 and M91/30 were the most numerous imported weapons with more than 250,000 delivered. Mauser derivatives came second, with between 125,000 and 150,000 delivered. Given existing stocks of Mausers in Loyalist Spain and domestic wartime production, these rifles probably rivaled Mosin Nagants as the most common type on the Republican side.

Despite some perceptions, the bulk of the weapons delivered to the Loyalists--about 95%--were of reasonably usable types. Problems came from the multiplicity of types, which would have vastly complicated ammunition supply and weapons servicing, and from some of the shipped weapons reportedly being in poor condition. While the Soviets have been criticized for dumping old stocks and odd lots on the Republicans, it is evident that the Russians shipped many more weapons of their own manufacture than they did weapons imported under the pressures of World War One. And while the numbers of these imported weapons in Soviet arsenals as of

1936 are unknown, far more were imported to Russia during the Great War than were ever sent on to Spain. The Poles were by far the greater offenders, with only a quarter of the arms they shipped being of Polish manufacture.

### *Nationalist Arms: Sources*

For the Nationalists, sources for arms quickly became evident. While German and Italian support for the Nationalist revolt was not foreordained, it took little time for both Hitler and Mussolini to support the Nationalists with both arms and troops. While both leaders paid lip service to the Non-Intervention Agreement, neither allowed their support to be much encumbered by it. The Nationalists' greatest obstacles to obtaining arms were a lack of financial resources and difficulties in getting the arms shipped. Neither obstacle blocked arms shipments for long. The Italians alone provided 240,000 rifles and 10,000 machineguns, together with much additional military aid.<sup>93</sup> The Nationalists received at least 155,110 "Mauser 98" rifles and 2,000 MG 13 machineguns through HISMA, the semi-official German-Spanish export company, while British intelligence credited the Germans with shipping 320,000 rifles to Spain via Portugal just between January 1937 and August 1938.<sup>94</sup> While the precise type of "Mauser 98" rifles received by the Insurgents is not given, the same source uses the same phrase to refer to Mausers brought to Spain by the Condor Legion. These were apparently Modell 33 short rifles, and at least some of the Mauser the rifles shipped to the Nationalists may have been of the same standard export model.<sup>95</sup> The Nationalists ended the war with 1,090,000 rifles and other personal weapons and 35,000 automatic weapons, which strongly suggests that shipments beyond those mentioned above reached them.<sup>96</sup> I doubt that internal production and captures made up the difference,

particularly given wartime wastage. While I can find no additional figures for German aid, it was clearly significant, probably making up most of the difference.<sup>97</sup>

One indication of the scope of German aid can be seen in the Spanish Army post-war. After the end of the civil war the army adopted a Mauser rifle chambered for 7.92mm--the standard German rifle cartridge-- as its standard infantry arm. It even rechambered some of its 7mm weapons to accept the 7.92mm cartridge.<sup>98</sup> Despite the Spanish army having received almost a quarter of a million Italian rifles (probably Carcanos of some type, in 6.5x52mm, as these were the standard Italian service rifle starting in 1891), neither the rifles nor their ammunition is mentioned in accounts of the post-war Spanish army. This suggests that however substantial the Italian aid, the Nationalists received far more German weapons in 7.92mm caliber.

The Carlists ordered 6,000 rifles, 150 heavy machineguns, and 300 light machineguns from a German arms dealer in anticipation of the Nationalist coup, only to have the arms blocked from export at Antwerp in August 1939.<sup>99</sup> Despite the initial blocking of the shipment, the machineguns at least were subsequently delivered to the Carlist headquarters in France.<sup>100</sup> The precise types of guns provided are unknown. Howson also mentions in passing a Falangist shipment of 250 "Bergmann machine rifles" through Portugal that flaunted the non-intervention observers put in place to monitor such shipments.<sup>101</sup> It is unclear from the reference whether these were MG 15 nA light machineguns or MP 18 submachine guns. The MG 15 nA light machineguns were World War One weapons, air-cooled, belt-fed guns with bipod mounts, tipping the scales at 28 pounds and firing at a rate of 500 rounds per minute. The MP 18s were submachine guns using drum or stick magazines and firing the 9mm Parabellum pistol round.

The Nationalists also had some success in intercepting shipments of arms to the Loyalists at sea, perhaps with the collusion of those selling or shipping the arms. There were two notable instances of this. In the first, the *Silvia* was captured in October 1936 with a cargo of Polish and German arms.<sup>102</sup> The Polish weapons consisted of 100 wz. 28 light machine guns, 5,000 old Chauchat automatic rifles, and 1,482 Bergmann MG 15nA light machine guns, while 250 Maxim heavy machine guns and 4,971 Mauser rifles and carbines came to the ship from Hamburg. The Maxims were probably the MG 08 German version given their source, and all that is known about the Mausers is that they were chambered in 7.92mm Mauser.<sup>103</sup> In fact, all of the weapons except the Chauchats used the same 7.92mm round, with the Chauchats using French 8mm Lebel ammunition. The Maxims and Mausers were found to be in good condition and were presumably put to use by the Insurgents, but many of the Polish guns were in bad shape and may have been discarded.<sup>104</sup>

The Nationalists also captured the *Hordena* in April of 1937. She was carrying 5,000 Mannlicher M1888-90 and M1890 rifles, as well as aircraft, ammunition, and spare parts for Bergmann light machine guns. The Insurgents almost certainly discarded these weapons, with their unique ammunition requirements, although the Republicans, who received similar rifles, likely did not have that luxury.<sup>105</sup>

Still more adroit was the affair of the *Axpe Mendi*. That ship left Antwerp on 2 April 1937 bound for the Republic, met the German ship *Carl Lords* at sea, and transferred half her cargo of 10,500 rifles and 23,000 pistols to the German. The *Carl Lords* then took her cargo on to Lisbon for transshipment to the Nationalists. Unfortunately, I could find no more details regarding these arms.<sup>106</sup>



While these three incidents are colorful, they were hardly necessary for arms to flow to the Insurgents. Both the Germans and the Italians proved perfectly willing to provide aid directly to the Nationalists, with the first Italian ship carrying supplies to the Nationalists sailing on 29 July 1936 and the first German ship on 31 July. Despite British pressure on the Portuguese, German arms quickly began to flow through Portugal to Spain.<sup>107</sup>

*Summary: Nationalists*

This is my attempt to sum up the types and number of small arms used by the Nationalists in the civil war. I make no claim that this list is exhaustive. In particular, I have not attempted to list the types of pistols and submachine guns that could have been in use.

Model	Number	Probability	Notes
Spanish Model 1893 Rifle and Model 1916 Short Rifle	Unknown	Certain	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces. Photos show these guns in use. M1916 produced by both sides during war.
Spanish Modified Gewehr 98 Rifle	Unknown	Likely	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces.
Spanish Carbines: Model 1893, Model 1895, Model 1916	Unknown	Certain	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces. Less numerous than rifles, but photos show some in use.
Standard Modell 1933 Short Rifle	Unknown	Likely	Bought by Spanish government before war, in 7mm.

Other Mauser Rifles	At least 160,081	Certain	Including arms from HISMA and those on <i>Silvia</i> . Possibly Modell 33 short rifles, but possibly other types as well.
Italian rifles	250,000	Certain	Types unknown, but probably Carcano types.
Hotchkiss M1922 Light Machineguns	2000 or more	Likely	Standard weapon for Spanish armed forces.
Madsen M1907 and M1922 Light Machineguns	Unknown	Possible	Standard weapons for Spanish armed forces.
MG 13 Machineguns	At least 2,000	Certain	Appears in posed photo of a “fascist machinegun squad.”
Italian machineguns	10,000	Certain	Types unknown, but probably a mix of Breda 30 light machineguns and various heavy machineguns.
Hotchkiss Model 1914 Heavy Machineguns	1400 or more	Likely	Standard weapon for Spanish armed forces.
MG 08 Heavy Machineguns	250 or more	Possible	A photo shows a Nationalist machinegun position with a water-cooled gun lacking a shield.
Bergmann “machine rifles”	At least 250	Likely	These could have been MG 15 nA light machineguns or MG 18 submachine guns.

The Nationalists probably also made use of captured Republican weapons, particularly if the captured weapons used ammunition available to the Nationalists such as 7mm or 7.92mm Mauser. Possible examples include the 100 Polish wz.28 light machineguns and the 1,482 Bergmann MG 15 nA light machineguns that the Nationalists captured on the *Silvia*. By one account, the Insurgents used Chauchat automatic rifles abandoned by the Republicans as unworkable.<sup>108</sup> The Nationalists are also known to have imported 11,500 pistols.

Apart from Italian aid of 240,000 rifles and 10,000 machineguns, estimated German shipments of 320,000 rifles and 550,000 pistols, and the relatively modest shipments and captures detailed above, how many other small arms did the Nationalists import? This is not an easy question to answer, but some suggestions can be gleaned from a comparison to the Republican forces. The Republicans imported about 600,000 rifles and more than 21,000 machineguns. They also had about 130,000 rifles on hand (discounting early losses to the Insurgents) and eventually manufactured more. They began the war with 1,600 machineguns. Over the course of the war, they apparently put more men under arms than did the Nationalists, although the disparity was not great. Despite ultimately obtaining at least 700,000 rifles, the Republicans complained of being perennially short of arms.

In contrast, the Insurgents started the war with no more than 410,000 rifles. Coming to that total requires that the Army of Africa's rifles be counted as an addition to the 500,000 total rifles and that all of the Spanish rifles captured from the Republicans shortly after the start of the war were captured intact--two optimistic assumptions. Aid from the Italians and Germans would bring the maximum to 970,000. Added to this would be any internal production. If in fact the

Germans provided 320,000 rifles throughout the course of the war, these numbers come close to satisfying the Nationalist demand

For machineguns, the Nationalists likely received substantial aid from Germany as well as Italy. The Nationalists began with 3,400 machineguns and acquired 12,000 more from the Italians and the Germans. While the Nationalists may have manufactured some machineguns internally, I doubt that domestic production satisfied demand. Given the general sense that Nationalist forces were better equipped with automatic weapons than were their Loyalist counterparts, these additional imports may well have exceeded 12,000 weapons.

All that said, the types of weapons that might have been imported by the Nationalists remains obscure. For example, Modell 1933 Mauser short rifles would have been logical weapons to go to Spain., They were widely exported from Germany, were used by the Condor Legion in Spain, and would have been of a type familiar to Spanish troops but for their use of a 7.92mm round.<sup>109</sup> However, I have found no clear cut evidence that the Insurgents received them beyond a reference to Mauser 98s being imported.

### *Conclusion*

It rapidly became clear to both the Republicans and the Nationalists that their small arms needs would far outstrip stocks in hand and domestic production. For the Insurgents, the failure of the initial revolt meant a prolonged war. Conversely, the inability of the Loyalists to quash the revolt entirely pointed to a lengthy conflict. The Loyalist needs were particularly acute, as the Republic began the war with fewer weapons on hand, restricted access to domestic production,

and no coherent armed force (such as the Insurgents' Army of Africa) fully equipped for military operations.

In these circumstances, the policy of non-intervention pushed by Great Britain and adopted at least in form by the European nations hurt the Republic far more than it did the Nationalists. Russia proved willing to flaunt the Non-Intervention Committee on behalf of the Republican cause. Other countries shipped some arms, but most of those acted only after tortuous attempts to provide at least a fig leaf of cover against accusations that they were violating the Non-Intervention Agreement. Mexico, not a party to the agreement, was also quick to ship arms to the Republic, but she could not match the great arms-producing centers of Europe in the volume of guns that she could provide.

Of the European arms producers, Great Britain and France were effectively sidelined while Germany and Italy were whole-heartedly supporting the Insurgents. Belgium and Czechoslovakia had major arms production centers, but only the Czechs provided any appreciable number of arms to the Republic and those only belatedly. The Republic was somewhat lucky to find the Polish army in the midst of a rearmament program and so willing to sell its old weapons, although the hodgepodge of weapon types and (in at least some cases) their poor condition made this a mixed blessing. Arms deliveries from the Russians also presented the Republic with a multiplicity of types and perhaps condition issues as well.<sup>110</sup> But while the Soviets took the opportunity to unload old and foreign weapons on Spain, at least the great majority of the weapons they shipped were of types currently in use with the Soviet forces.

Nationalist arms issues were not as immediately pressing as those facing the Republic, but they appeared to be more serious in the long run--this primarily due to an inability to pay. The Italians and Germans solved Insurgents' problem by selling on credit and ignoring the Non-

Intervention Agreement. These small arms sales have not received nearly as much historical attention as the sales to the Republic, with the contributions of Italian and German armed forces getting far more focus. Clearly, there were substantial small arms shipments to the Nationalists and there is at least a hint that the rearming Germans took the opportunity to send older weapons on to the Insurgents. But the details of this support still awaits an in-depth historical treatment, at least in English.

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<sup>1</sup> Howson says that this number is just for the mainland, but Thomas says that it is the total number available for Spain and her possessions. Gerald Howson, *Arms for Spain: The Untold History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 28. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 316.

<sup>2</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ball, *Mauser Military Rifles of the World* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1996), 4th Edition, 215.

<sup>4</sup> Phillip Peterson, *The Standard Catalog of Military Firearms: The Collector's Price and Reference Guide* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 2013), 7th Edition, 333-4. The 1933 models would have been made in Germany. *Mauser Military Rifles*, 223. Ball says that Modell 1933 Mauser short rifles were "purchased by Spain, both prior to, and during the Spanish Civil War." *Mauser Military Rifles*, 223. Obviously, the government would have been the buyer before the civil war. During the war, either the Nationalists or the Republicans or both could have been buying these rifles.

<sup>5</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 220.

<sup>6</sup> *Military Firearms*, 333.

<sup>7</sup> *Guns for Spain*, 28-9.

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<sup>8</sup> *Manual du Fusil-Mitrailleur Hotchkiss à Bande Chargeur* (Paris: Hotchkiss), 36-7.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph E. Smith, *Small Arms of the World* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1973), 10th Revised Edition, 341-2. Thomas calls the standard Spanish light machinegun the “Trapote,” but this seems to have been a Spanish-designed gun adopted in 1933 and produced only in small numbers. *Spanish Civil War*, 316.

<sup>10</sup> *Small Arms*, 377. *Guns for Spain*, 28-9.

<sup>11</sup> *Military Firearms*, 325-31.

<sup>12</sup> *Military Firearms*, 332.

<sup>13</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 29

<sup>14</sup> *Spanish Civil War*, 312, 371, 422.

<sup>15</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 221. *Republican Army*, 238.

<sup>16</sup> For these numbers, see *Arms for Spain*, 29; *Spanish Civil War*, 315-6; Michael Alpert, *The Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19-21; Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 79. Alpert’s numbers are the most detailed, although he acknowledges that they reflect the number of men in each geographic zone and not necessarily the number of men loyal and willing to fight for each side. His numbers are all at the low end of the range.

<sup>17</sup> *Spanish Civil War*, 315.

<sup>18</sup> *Republican Army*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> *Republican Army*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Republican Army*, 44-51.

<sup>21</sup> *Republican Army*, 43, 56. This counts the Basque and other north coast units at between 400 and 500 men per battalion.

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<sup>22</sup> *Organization of British Infantry Divisions 1939-1945* (Document 939BXIA in U.S. Army Combined Arms Research Library). *Table of Organization No. 7, Infantry Division (Square)* (Washington, D.C.: War Department 1940).

<sup>23</sup> *Republican Army*, 315. The “mixed brigade” was a sort of mini-division, with (ideally) sixteen infantry companies, four machinegun companies, four light artillery batteries, a motorized cavalry squadron, an engineer company, and supporting units. From the start, the ideal was hard to meet in practice. *Republican Army*, 74.

<sup>24</sup> *Battle for Spain*, 198. *Spanish Civil War*, 594, 736-7.

<sup>25</sup> *Battle for Spain*, 202. *Republican Army*, 82, 258, 269. *Spanish Civil War*, 507, 526 (ration strength of 350,000 in winter 1936-1937, but number probably inflated), 758.

<sup>26</sup> *Spanish Civil War*, 900.

<sup>27</sup> *Republican Army*, 258.

<sup>28</sup> *Organization of British Infantry Divisions. Table of Organization No. 7.*

<sup>29</sup> *Republican Army*, 315. The brigade officially had 96 automatic rifles and 36 machineguns for 3,850 men, although this varied widely (and even wildly) in practice.

<sup>30</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 114-5.

<sup>31</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 151-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Small Arms of the World*, 516-8.

<sup>33</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 260

<sup>34</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 263. The submachine guns are described as “Austrian sub-machine-guns, old, 08/18.” The only weapons I can find with this model designation are German Maxim guns: one type an air-cooled light machinegun in 7.92mm and the other the submachinegun described in the text.



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<sup>35</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 265-6.

<sup>36</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 266-7. *Mauser Military Rifles*, 237.

<sup>37</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 267.

<sup>38</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 274-5.

<sup>39</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 270-1.

<sup>40</sup> John Seehan, "Arming Ivan: The Bear Begs, Borrows and Buys to Stay in the Fight," *Guns Magazine*, April 2005: 41-2.

<sup>41</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 271-2.

<sup>42</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 274.

<sup>43</sup> *Republican Army*, 77.

<sup>44</sup> This total includes weapons that were shipped to French ports, not known to be delivered to Spain, but not returned to Russia, the implication being that they were sent on to Spain but not specifically recorded as such. About 38,000 small arms fall into this category. *Arms for Spain*, 301.

<sup>45</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 278-9. Additional types of rifles and heavy machineguns may have been included in the totals but, if so, their types are unknown. Howson says that the light machineguns were probably "Maxim MG 08s and Hotchkiss M09s" and I have assumed that to be the case, the MG 08/15 being the light machinegun version of the MG 08.

<sup>46</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 138-9.

<sup>47</sup> Seehan, 42-3.

<sup>48</sup> Seehan, 39.

<sup>49</sup> Seehan, 39-40.

<sup>50</sup> Seehan, 40-1.

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<sup>51</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 279-80.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Hogg. *Encyclopedia of Infantry Weapons of World War II* (New York: Military Press, 1977), 83.

<sup>53</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 281. Howson lists two separate cargos each containing 9,000 Winchesters, but says elsewhere that only 9,000 in total were shipped. *Arms for Spain*, 138. Because the other numbers in the latter reference do not foot precisely to the detailed manifests that Howson provides, I have shown two 9,000 rifle shipments.

<sup>54</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 281.

<sup>55</sup> *Infantry Weapons*, 83-4. *Small Arms*, 600.

<sup>56</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 283.

<sup>57</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 283-4.

<sup>58</sup> Although the rifles first delivered may have been manufactured for Russia in the United States. Cecil Eby, *Between the Bullet and the Lie*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston: 1969), 37.

<sup>59</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 285.

<sup>60</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 276, 286. A number of the detailed manifests merely list rifle deliveries as “rifles” without more details. Howson’s details on foreign rifles delivered by the Russians strongly suggests that these rifles were Russian-made arms.

<sup>61</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 144, 287.

<sup>62</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 288. The manifest describes these as “Maxim-Tokarev MG 08/15,” an understandable error given that the weapon was based on the same action as the MG 08/15 although with air rather than water cooling.

<sup>63</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 288-90.

<sup>64</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 295-6.

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<sup>65</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 297.

<sup>66</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 297. Details for this voyage are few. Howson surmises that the ship made for Marseilles because she was too well known to pass through the Nationalist blockade to a Republican port.

<sup>67</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 297-8. The “M34” designation does not conform to any known variant of the Mosin Nagant or to any foreign rifle acquired by Russia during the Great War. It is possible that the *Bonifacio* was carrying some arms not originating with the Russian, but that still does not solve the mystery.

<sup>68</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 298.

<sup>69</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 298-9.

<sup>70</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 154-60.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Ball, *Mauser Military Rifles of the World* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 2011), 5th Edition, 116. Ball says 40,000 rifles. I have followed Howson.

<sup>72</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 299-300.

<sup>73</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 142, 301-2

<sup>74</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 192.

<sup>75</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 87.

<sup>76</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 86. The details given are 50,000 new Mauser M33 rifles, 30,000 old rifles, 16,000 Mannlicher rifles in 8mm, 63 heavy machine guns, 2,000 water-cooled light machineguns, 360 air-cooled light machineguns suitable for aircraft, 1,000 Bergmanns (presumably MP 18s), and 500 machine rifles (presumably BARs). Howson points out that an inadequate amount of ammunition was purchased with the guns. The Belgian dealers were

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selling both recently manufactured weapons and stock acquired as surplus after the end of World War I.

<sup>77</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 271.

<sup>78</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 276.

<sup>79</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 273-4, 276. Howson says that she may also have carried arms left over from other deals.

<sup>80</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 164.

<sup>81</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 163-8. *Arms for Spain*, 111n, 234.

<sup>82</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 236-8.

<sup>83</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 22-4.

<sup>84</sup> *Bullet and the Lie*, 37.

<sup>85</sup> A note on photos. There were culled from a Google search for Spanish Civil War images. Many of these photos are obviously staged shots, with popular subjects being comely young women holding rifles and being billed as Republican militia, so they cannot be taken as absolute evidence of combat use. I have tried to distinguish between obviously posed publicity shots and photos more representative of combat settings. It would be interesting to peruse the photo archives of the news services active at the time to see which weapons were pictured.

<sup>86</sup> *Bullet and the Lie*, 34.

<sup>87</sup> *Bullet and the Lie*, 34.

<sup>88</sup> *Bullet and the Lie*, 34.

<sup>89</sup> *Republican Army*, 313.

<sup>90</sup> *Military Weapons*, 337. *Small Arms*, 547.

<sup>91</sup> *Republican Army*, 43-4.

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<sup>92</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 139-40.

<sup>93</sup> *Spanish Civil War*, 938.

<sup>94</sup> For the first set of numbers, see Lucas Molina Franco, *El Legado de Sigfrido: La ayuda militar alemania al Ejército y la Marina nacional en la Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939)* (Valladolid, Spain, AF Editores De Historica Militiae, 2005). Franco provides the numbers of Mausers and MG 13s. He says that 1500 of the MG 13s were light machineguns and 500 were delivered as heavy machineguns. For the citation to British intelligence sources, see Paul Preston and Ann Mackenzie, eds., *The Republic Besieged: Civil War in Spain 1936-1939* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 64. This source also reports that the Germans delivered 550,000 pistols through Portugal in the same time period. That number seems high, but it may reflect the fact that the Nationalists were not at first in control of the pistol producing regions of Spain and may also include machine pistols and submachine guns. Yet another set of numbers comes from Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War*, <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/kod01/index.html>, Table IV-1. He gives a total of 157,306 rifles and 31,000 machinegun sent by the Germans, and 240,747 rifles and 3,436 machineguns delivered by the Italians.

<sup>95</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 114.

<sup>96</sup> *Republican Army*, 239.

<sup>97</sup> *Spanish Civil War*, 937-8.

<sup>98</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 223-5.

<sup>99</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 84-5.

<sup>100</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 87.

<sup>101</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 231

<sup>102</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 195-6.

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<sup>103</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 196, 261. Howson considers whether the Bergmanns were MP 18 submachine guns, which the Republicans did use during the war, but concludes that they were not. He bases this on the Poles labeling them as LMGs rather than SMGs. The Poles later shipped spare parts for Bergmann light machineguns, which further supports the idea that they had shipped MG 15s to Spain. *Arms for Spain*, 272.

<sup>104</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 196. Although there is a hint that these weapons (or the weapons captured later in the *Hordena*) were refurbished by the Nationalist armorers. *Republican Army*, 252.

<sup>105</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 272.

<sup>106</sup> *Arms for Spain*, 197.

<sup>107</sup> *Republic Besieged*, 63-4.

<sup>108</sup> *Republican Army*, 313.

<sup>109</sup> *Mauser Military Rifles*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> There are certainly references to problems with the delivered arms, such as Russian Maxims being delivered with shot out barrels and requiring reconditioning before they could be used, worn-out Lewis guns, and Colt machineguns made ineffective due to bad ammunition belts. *Arms for Spain*, 139; *Bullet and the Lie*, 47-8.