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By: Colin (debin666@storm.ca) (Reprinted from April 1999)
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By: Ward M. Clark (wardmclark@home.com)

Reader's comments

No reader's comments this month!

A Perspective on the Spanish FR-8

By: Colin (debin666@storm.ca)

(For the complete story and some great pictures, please see Colin's Web page at, http://www.storm.ca/~debin666/html/the_fr-8_page.html – Ward)

For three months, I researched the history of these misunderstood carbines.

OK, so I didn't really get to go to Spain (darn), but I've dug deep to find out some history of these converted Mausers.

When I purchased a FR-8 at a local gun show awhile back, I was only looking to expand my small military rifle collection with another Mauser type action. I liked the idea of having a Mauser in 7.62x51 because of my passion for reloading and shooting with military guns and the 7.62x51 cartridge offers so many options for the reloader to experiment with.

What I didn't realize, was the amount of controversy these guns had generated since hitting the North-American surplus market.

Whenever I acquire another surplus gun, my first endeavor is always to research its origins and uses. Here in Canada, research material is hard to come by in this subject. My initial readings in "Rifles of the world" came up pretty well empty. I then began to search across the Internet for information.

I started reading huge threads of arguments in past postings of the newsgroup "Rec.guns". I read them all but was still left with a lack of FACTUAL knowledge on the history and uses of my "new" FR-8.

Although the newsgroup threads were helpful, the amount of interpretation of facts by well-meaning and often very knowledgeable people, only left me confused and more intent on finding out more.

After several searches of libraries and conversations with fellow collectors turned up nothing new, I contacted the Embassy of Spain in Ottawa, Canada. I lucked out here, as the Colonel I spoke with has a brother in Spain who as well as being in the Spanish forces, also is a avid collector. Unfortunately, this fellow has not yet come "online" and so our discussions took a bit of time to travel back and forth across the Atlantic but he was able to fax me some interesting articles relating to the Cetme program and the subsequent conversion of Spain's arsenals of model 1916 and 1943 Mauser rifles to the FR-7 and FR-8's...

By 1960, the Cetme assault rifle program was well under way. Spain and Germany had signed joint development agreements for this project. This program led to Germany's development of the H&K assault

rifles. In fact, as early as 1956, parts made in Spain (barrels and others) for the Cetme program were being sold to Germany and used in their own rifles using the U.S.30T65 cartridge.(7.62x51 NATO)

In 1964 , the Cetme model `C' was in full production. Also at this time, Spain adopted the 7.62 NATO round for standard issue. At this time, Spain decided to rejuvenate their stores of light arms. Enormous stores of Mauser rifles in excellent condition were on hand. A revaluation was done in order to put them to the best use so they could be used serving Spain's auxiliary corps of engineers, communication personnel , drivers etc. An examination of resources found that enough parts produced for the Cetme `C' rifles could be used in the refurbishing of the 1916 and 1943 model Mausers.

This unusual but practical combination, gave birth to a new bolt action rifle affectionately known as ``El Cetmeton". Conserving all the virtues which made the Mauser so legendary for its reliability, but cutting its dimensions and improving in areas of mobility and in aiming mechanisms, it looks more like an assault weapon. This esthetic impression is due to the tube situated underneath the barrel , which looks like a gas tube, but in reality is only a space for a cleaning kit and part of the sight protector and the bayonet mount.

I also wanted to decipher the meaning of the model number designations of these guns (FR-7 &FR-8) .My sources agree on Fusil Reformado 7 & 8 , That's fine but do the 7 & 8 stand for? I heard two different theories. Some people claim the 7 & 8 come from the original caliber's (7mm & 8mm Mauser) , But another source in Spain claims the numbers correspond to the 7th and 8th Military regions of Spain at the time, which was where the weapons were modified.

Summary of Transformations...

--Stock and handguard shortened to 28.9" & 8.8" respectively.

--- Cetme `c' barrels modified to fit and shortened to 17.75"

--- Cetme front sight housings (inverted) and a cleaning kit housed in the lower hole and stabilized by the rear of the kit resting in a recess of the front stock band.

--- Various modifications to the magazine for proper feeding of the 7.62x51 cartridge.

--- ``mixed" rear sight welded to the receiver, with a open `V' notch and 3 diopter apertures (settings for 100, 200, 300 and 400 meters)

--- ``NATO" style muzzle flash hider with machining for grenade launcher

AMMO SQUABBLES...

The biggest controversy today concerning these rifles is , what ammunition are they designed to use. I urge anyone to consider common sense in this matter. A competent gunsmith before firing should inspect ANY surplus firearm. And even then you must still be aware that shooting guns of this kind can be risky. They were never designed for civilian use, they were often produced with substandard materials in wartime conditions and by sometimes less than experienced craftsmen. THIS BEING SAID, LET'S GO ON...

From what I've learned, I believe that by 1965 when the FR-7's & 8's were being made, that Spain was using basically standard NATO ammunition. My Spanish source quotes a spec. page listing FR-8 using a 147gr. bullet with a velocity of 2700fps. He also points out the worldwide sales of a Cetme sporter in .308 Win. that uses the same barrels and the Germans use of the NATO round as early as 1956.

He speculates that if a lighter bullet/velocity cartridge WAS used it would have been developed to aid in control when using full-auto fire with the Cetme type guns, as his experience was that they were quite a handful when used as such with the NATO ammo.

Again as I stated above, you must assume a "use at own risk" attitude when firing these guns. Moderate handloads would be my recommendation to anyone considering a rifle converted from one cartridge to another.

And so the FR-7 and FR-8 served Spain from 1965 to around 1980. By then the 5.56 Cetme models had been adopted and the older model `C's filtered down to the auxiliary forces. Most of the FR-7's & 8's were seldom used But some saw use in various campaigns including N. Africa as Spain tried to hold onto colonialized Spanish Sahara.

Today Spanish collectors are having trouble finding these guns. All were sold for export. My Spanish friend paid 200 German Marks (about \$160 Canadian) for his FR-8 on a trip to Nuremberg in 1993. He said at that show he saw several that had been sadly sporterized. Thanks go out to the many people that helped on this project, especially Angela Laird who learned all about rifles while translating pages of Spanish text and the Spanish embassy in Ottawa for taking an interest in this project!

Publisher's Comments

By: Ward M. Clark (wardmclark@home.com)

Pretty sparse month this time, folks!

Everybody please bear in mind that the Monthly depends on reader input to survive, and that input has been dropping off these last two or three months. Everybody's got at least one good story in them, so don't forget to share the wealth – write 'em up and send 'em in!

One piece of news for the month – the Mauser Monthly is now available to view on my Web site at www.frombearcreek.com. Go to the site, take a look at the index on the far left, and down at the bottom you'll see a link to the Mauser Monthly.

In a few months, I'll make the decision whether or not to continue the e-mailed version, as the Web format allows more latitude where photos and so on are concerned – and, I will of course continue an e-mail text version for anyone who lacks Web access.

But, after several years, the Monthly is moving in a direction I've wanted to go for some time – so when you write up your stories, don't forget to scan pics to send along! This move could make Gunsmithing and customizing stories in particular much more comprehensive.

Everybody enjoy the new format on the Web, enjoy the rest of the site as well, and don't forget to send us some stories!

Until next month, then;

Good shooting!

Ward