Figure 1. (Courtesy Jim Curlovic)

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WINCHESTER MODEL 1895: THE WWI RUSSIAN CONTRACT

by Michael Carrick

The Great War, WW1, was precipitated by the assassination in Sarajevo of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian national, Gavrilo Princip, on June 28, 1914. The murder of Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a Serb, caused Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia July 28th.

Like dominoes falling, one European country after another mobilized their armies according to standing treaties and mutual assistance pacts. Russia, an ally of Serbia, declared general mobilization on July 30th, and by August 5th, Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. Germany, being allies of Austria-Hungary, also declared war on Russia. So, the battle was on, and Russia suddenly needed millions of small arms.

The armories in Russia were unable to keep up with the demand for rifles and had to find reliable suppliers. England and France were heavily involved with supplying their own troops, so the United States and Japan became the major suppliers to Russia.

The standard Russian military arm was the Mosin-Nagant Model 1891 bolt-action rifle in caliber 7.62 × 54 mm rimmed. Orders were let to Remington-UMC Company and New England Westinghouse Company for over 3 million Mosin-Nagant Model 1891 rifles. Both companies needed time to tool-up for orders of this magnitude, but Russia was desperately in need of rifles — some of their troops were going into battle unarmed with instructions to pick up the rifles of fallen comrades.

Winchester Arms Company was already manufacturing a rifle capable of handling .30 caliber rimmed cartridges: their Model 1895 lever-action rifle. Chambering for the 7.62 × 54 mm rimmed Russian caliber could be accomplished in a few weeks as contrasted with Remington's and New England Westinghouse's requirement of several months to tool-up.

THE PURCHASE CONTRACTS

On November 13, 1914, 100,000 muskets were ordered; production commenced June 1915, and it was considered completed by December 1915.

On August 27, 1915, an additional 200,000 were ordered; production commenced December 1915, and it was considered completed by January 1917. [1]

Actual deliveries of 104,404 and 189,414 muskets, respectively, from these orders were made, for a total delivered of 293,818. [2]

The first order, for 100,000 muskets, was placed by the Russian purchasing commission through the Baldwin Locomotive Works, an American company already supplying locomotives and railroad equipment to Imperial Russia. Baldwin in turn placed the order with Winchester. An additional order on April 5, 1915, added 100,000 combination tools and bore cleaners. Final delivery by Baldwin was 25,811 muskets with short bayonets, and 74,189 muskets with long bayonets for a total of 100,000.[3]

Figure 1A.

The second order, for 200,000 muskets, was placed with J.P. Morgan and Co. by the British Government on behalf of Imperial Russia. Russia was essentially bankrupt by early 1915 and had to draw upon a line of credit of £25 million per month grudgingly extended by the British Government fearful of collapse in the east.[4]

Figure 2. Model 1895 Musket right side.

Figure 3. Model 1895 Musket left side.

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MODEL 1895 MUSKET FOR RUSSIA

Winchester supplied its standard Model 1895 musket with the following modifications as required by the Russian Ordnance Department:

MODIFICATIONS OF STANDARD WINCHESTER 1895 MUSKET

1. Caliber 7.62 × 54R mm

2. Must be capable of being loaded from the standard 5-round Russian stripper clip.

3. Rear sight to be graduated in units of measurement equal to the Russian arshin (28 inches).

4. Sliding cover on buttplate over compartment in butt for combination tool and a pull-through bore cleaner.

5. Sling with the lower end having a quick-detachable swivel so the sling can be attached near the toe of the buttstock to the middle barrel band, or forward of the magazine to the swivel near the bayonet lug.

6. Must be supplied with a bayonet and steel scabbard with leather belt loop.

SPECIFICATIONS OF RUSSIAN MODEL 1895

Designation:
ВИНТОВКА ВИНЧЕСТЕРА ОБРАЗЕЦ 1915 ГОДА
(Rifle, Winchester, Model year 1915)

Caliber: 7.62 × 54 mm, rimmed, Model 1908L spitzer bullet

Magazine capacity: 5 cartridges (loaded from stripper clip)

Overall length: 46”

Barrel length: 28”

Weight: 9 lbs (unloaded)

Front Sight: Blade pinned in integral base

Rear Sight: Stepped base with pivoting ladder. Graduations alongside the left side of the stepped base start at 400 arshins and progress to 1400 arshins in increments of 200. The ladder can be raised with the lowest mark at 1500 to the highest mark of 3200, in increments of 100 arshins. The stamped numbers on the sight omit the 00, and are marked 4, 6, 8 . . . up to 32 on the V-notch at the top of the leaf. An arshin is 28 inches. The sight is not adjustable for windage.

Tools: Pull-through bore cleaner and a combination assembly/disassembly tool to be stored in a cavity under the buttplate trap door.

Sling: Leather sling, approximately 48” long, 1” wide, with detachable swivel, and wire loop hook for extending to top swivel.

Figure 4.

Figure 5. First 25,811 Russian Model 1895 muskets were ordered with 8" blade bayonets. The balance of the order of 300,000 were supplied with 16" blade bayonets. (Courtesy Joe Leiper)

Figure 6.

BAYONETS

The original order for the bayonets for the Model 1895 muskets called for a bayonet with an 8-inch blade, steel scabbard, and leather belt loop. After delivery of the first 25,811 bayonets, the Russian government changed the blade length specification to 16 inches. Even with the new, longer bayonet, the overall length of the combination was still 6 inches shorter than their standard Model 1891 Mosin-Nagant infantry rifle and bayonet.

MARKINGS ON RIFLE

Upper tang: (three lines) MODEL 1895 / —WINCHESTER— / TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. & FGN.

Lower tang: [serial number] and a B (On Winchester firearms, the B indicates modifications, and is a guide when ordering replacement parts).[5]

Left side of receiver: (Two lines) MANUFACTURED BY THE WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO. NEW HAVEN. CONN. U.S.A / PATENTED NOV.5.95. NOV.12.95. AUG.17.97. JAN.25.98. AUG.28.98. AUG.6.1907. Note: I have observed two sizes of fonts for these marks.

Right side of receiver: Russian inspector's mark, Хиз, Cyrillic letters: kha-i-ze in a rectangular box with cut corners. This mark is sometimes also found on the flat of the buttstock and the rifle barrel.

Top of receiver: Winchester proof mark over 7.62 over M.M. There is sometimes the Russian letter П, standing for Проверочное, meaning Prooved, stamped near the Winchester proof mark. This appears to have been stamped after receipt of the guns.

Figure 7. Russian inspector's mark, Хиз, Cyrillic letters: kha-i-ze in a rectangular box with cut corners.

Figure 8. Winchester proof mark over 7.62 over M.M.

ACCESSORIES

Assembly/disassembly Tool: The Model 1895 Winchester is a difficult rifle to field strip, and its small combination tool is quite complex. This tool was designed by Albert Laudensack at Winchester.[6, 7] Laudensack is the same man who designed the clip guides fastened to the side of the receiver to enable loading the magazine from the 5-shot stripper clip.[8] The tool has three punches and one removable retainer pin for reassembly of the carrier and magazine. It holds the related parts in the correct position until the carrier screw can be inserted. This retainer pin is shown at the tip of the tool in the 12 o'clock position. The uses of the two notches on the center leg of the tool are as compression clamps. The notch on the left side of the center leg will compress the split pin of the finger lever when the left-hand leg of the tool is squeezed against it, and the notch on the right-and leg will compress the finger-lever link-pin when the right-hand two legs are squeezed together.[9] [Figure 9.]

Figure 9. Assembly/Disassembly Tool

Pull-through bore cleaner: The pull-through bore cleaner was the same as supplied by Winchester with their .30-06 Model 1895 muskets. [Figure 10.]

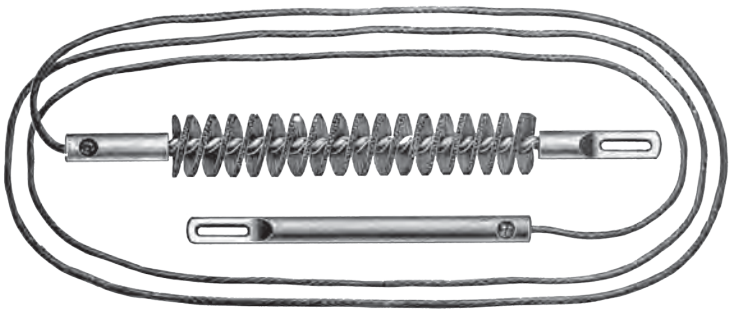

Figure 10. Pull-through Bore Cleaner

SPANISH CIVIL WAR

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Russia supported the Republican Government in their battle against General Franco's Nationalist Army. In return for large quantities of gold coins and bullion from the Spanish treasury, Russia shipped immense amounts of armaments to Spain, among which were almost half a million small arms. One of the shipping documents lists 9,000 Winchester Model 1895 Muskets, but there could have been more since some of the lists describe items such as "20,000 rifles of foreign make." In other words, not Russian Mosin-Nagant rifles, which were usually listed specifically by name.

After Franco's Nationalist forces prevailed, a "National Ordnance Recovery Unit" was commissioned to survey, sort, clean, or refurbish all captured or surrendered armament. The acceptance mark of this inspection is the MP 8 flaming bomb stamped on the buttstock of each rifle. Figure 11 shows the mark stamped into the right side of the buttstock of a Russian Contract Model 1895 Winchester. It has been reported that the Republican Army had at least 50 varieties of small arms, and this MP 8 mark is seen on Mosin-Nagant rifles, Italian Vetterlis, Japanese

Figure 11. National Ordnance Recovery Unit acceptance mark.

Figure 12. Advertisement by Martin B. Retting, Culver City, California, in the December 1956 issue of *The Gun Report*.

Arisakas, 1895 Mannlichers, French Berthiers, and any number of arms that the Republicans could buy. Many of these Spanish-used guns were imported into the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.[10]

UNITED STATES (IMPORT FOR SALE)

The earliest import listing I could find for the Russian Winchester Model 1895 is an advertisement in the December 1956 issue of The Gun Report magazine. Martin B. Retting of Culver City, California, a well-known dealer and importer, offered the rifles in "good" condition for $39.50 and in "good to very good" condition for $47.50. This was not "cheap." According to financial charts, $47.50 in 1956 is equivalent to over $400 in today's dollars. [Figure 12.]

In the early 1960s the rifles were offered by Hunters Lodge in Alexandria, Virginia, for $34.50 in "fair condition." For an additional $5.00 they had a few considered to be in "good" condition. Hunters Lodge was a retail outlet for the immense amount of arms imported by the legendary Sam Cummings. In two separate deals in 1959–1960 and 1965–1966, Cummings bought over a million weapons and 259 million rounds of ammunition from the Spanish government, including all the arms left over from the Spanish Civil War.[11] [Figure 13.]

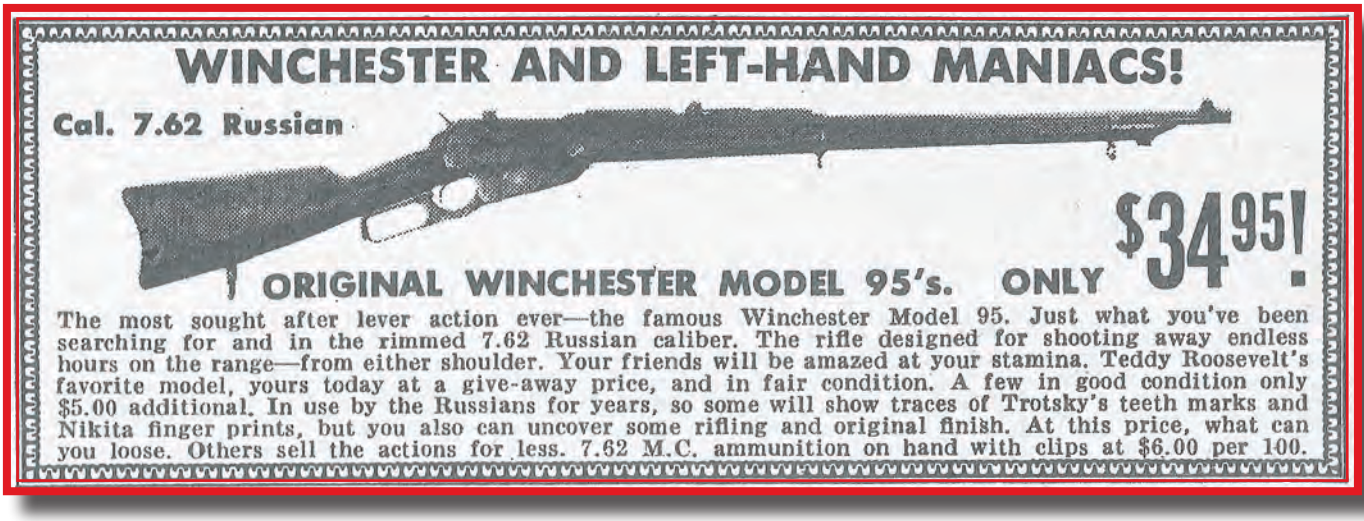

Figure 13. Advertisement by Hunters Lodge, Alexandria, Virginia, in *SHOOTING TIMES*, August, 1960

Figure 14. caption: The Commander of the Second Battalion of the Imperial Russian Life-Guards of the First Royal Rifle Regiment, Captain O.I. Pantyukhov (on the left), is watching the unloading of the boxes of American rifles "Winchester," on Platform No. 9 at the Brest railway station for delivery to a new post of the Brest-Litovsk fortress (Lithuania, now Belarus). Photo taken August 9, 1915.

Figure 15. Winchesters in action. Photo courtesy Jim Curlovic

References and Notes

1. Buffalo Bill Center of the West, McCracken Research Library, Cody, WY, MS 20, Series 1, Box 7, Folder 11

2. ibid. MS 20, Series 1, Box 7, Folder 4

3. ibid. MS 20, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 22

4. Meyer, G.J. A World Undone: The Story of the Great War 1914–1918, New York, Bantam Dell, 2006, page 315. For a detailed explanation of the financing, purchasing, and shipping of war material to Imperial Russia see Clawson, Charles W., Colt .45 Service Pistols Models of 1911 and 1911A1, Fort Wayne, IN: author, 1991, pg 153 - 157

5. Madis, George, The Winchester Book, Brownsboro, TX: Art and Reference House, 1985, page 451

6. Albert Laudensack was an ordnance engineer employed by Winchester, and one of the best rifle shots in the country. Campbell, John, The Winchester Single-Shot, Vol. 1, Lincoln, RI: Andrew Mowbray Inc.—Publishers, 1995, page 110

7. Buffalo Bill Center of the West, McCracken Research Library, Cody, WY, MS 20, Box 23, Folder 14, Winchester correspondence addressed to General C.B. Wheeler, Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D.C., February 8, 1918: "A.F. Laudensack, for 25 years in the employ of the Winchester Repeating Arms Co., as assembler of all classes of firearms. For the last 6 or 8 years employed in our model and experimental department. He has had particular experience with us and Browning rifles. He has also had much militia training, and couples this experience with more than usual ability as a marksman."

8. Johnson, Thomas C., History of Repeating Firearms and the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, unpublished manuscript, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, McCracken Research Library, Cody, WY, MS 20 page 29A

9. Dorsey, R. Stephen and James B. Shaffer, Gun Tools: Their History and Identification, Vol. 2, Eugene, OR: Collector's Library, 1997, page 108, and personal correspondence with James Shaffer, May 24, 2013, and subsequent mailing of his Winchester combination tool for photography.

10. Howson, Gerald, Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, pages 83 and 281

11. Brogan, Patrick and Albert Zarca, Deadly Business: Sam Cummings, Interarms, & The Arms Trade, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983, page 126

NOTE 1: This paper is a much-shortened version of a Chapter that I am writing for publication in a book in progress on the history and development of the Winchester Model 1895 rifle by Ed Lewis and Rob Kassab.

All photos by the author, unless specifically credited.

NOTE 2: Russia sent a team of inspectors (Russian Supply Committee) to the Winchester factory to approve each rifle as it was made. When approved, they stamped the ХиЗ mark on the gun as shown in the photo below. No one seems to know the meaning of this mark, including collectors in Russia.

American military inspectors usually stamped a cartouche with their initials inside. I don't think this is the case with ХиЗ. Notice the center character is in lower case, and the first and last characters are in upper case. The letter in the center is the character for the sound e, but it is also the word "and."

There is a phrase used in Russian, Хранение и Запас, meaning Stock and Storage. Notice the three initials are ХиЗ.

The Russian inspectors were approving these rifles to be packed and shipped to warehouses in Russia. To me, it seems very logical that they might have been using the phrase for "stock and storage." But, caution, this is only speculation on my part, and I have never seen any information on the exact meaning of ХиЗ. Please see Figure 7.