



Pech Hnos. booth at the Valencia Toy Fair in 1962 (Manuel Pech giving children figurines)



Cover of "Juguetes y Juegos de España" published for the first time for the Valencia fair of 1962.



Carlos Dinbier was the first President of the "Feria del Juguete de Valencia" and founder of the toy company, Brekar. He passed away in 1978.

Towards 1960 the Spanish plastic industry definitely took off with a concentration of firms manufacturing plastic toys sited on the east coast in villages such as Ibi or Onil and some others in Barcelona and Madrid.

In those early years plastic was imported and supplied in limited quantities to manufacturers. Out of typical Spanish wiliness some of the firms resold their plastic for a profit.

There were several reasons behind the boom of the Spanish toy industry at the time: first a general economic expansion in the country which, in its turn, made possible a birth rate increase and the creation of a middle class with enough purchasing power to acquire fine toys. Second, the fact that plastic, as opposite to lead, could only be profitable if produced on large, industrial runs. In addition a remarkable event happened in early 1962 which would be very important in developing and boosting the sector: the "Feria del Juguete de Valencia" (Valencia Toy Fair). This fair was promoted by businessman Carlos Dinbier from Juguetes Brekar, which specialized in children's costumes of Romans, crusaders, etc.; a space base and the first series of "Cascos Azules" soldiers.

In a similar way the quarterly trade magazine "Juguetes y Juegos de España" (Spanish Toys and Games) created by Juan B. Just was released in time for the first toy fair. This magazine was –and still is– a professional publication sporting articles and interviews about the toy trade and its main leaders, together with an accomplished report on new releases. Important business topics of

the time were extensively and professionally dealt with: exports, licenses or publicity campaigns. It was precisely Juan B. Just who intermediated in 1965 to have English designer George W. Erik come to Spain to work on a regular basis for Reamsa.



Pennant of the 1972 Valencia Toy Fair.

The fact that the market was regulated through the concession of import licenses rapidly swelled patent filings under the request that the item in question should be sold in the market for 12 months maximum. Spanish wiliness in action again, some would file patents –with or without knowledge of the original owner– to resell the permits to toy companies at a profit. A powerful Toy industry was born even if many things should change yet.

With the introduction of TV commercials, Spanish children would ask for generic toys no more. But rather ask for a particular, well defined, brand item following some TV character like those of Bonanza or the "Chiripitifláuticos" (untranslatable word for a comical TV show for children). TV spots surely boosted sales but, at the same time, largely increased expenses. Most companies simply couldn't afford this kind of publicity, not even for Christmas. In fact only Comansi and Jecsan could pay for regular publicity on TV while Reamsa had a sole spot for a sort of toy steering wheel for boys with no figures at all.

The demand for plastic figures increasing so fast, drew to faulty supply to the shops, and the apparition of pirate manufacturers too. They were called "plasticeros" at the time (literally "plastic operators" in a loose, pejorative meaning).

As stated before plastic soldiers were one of the first plastic toys ever produced in Spain. They covered a huge variety of subjects based on blockbuster movies, comic books, Spanish history, parades, cowboys and Indians, first and second world war, animals, musketeers, crusaders, moors, pirates, Tarzan, Foreign Legion, safaris, the Circus world, Arabs, astronauts, scuba divers, soccer players, "conquistadores", and so on.

In addition a long series of plastic, wood or paste accessories emerged: castles and forts from the Old West, the desert or the Canadian Mounted Police. Besides circus, Old West dioramas and towns, moon bases, the Bridge over the River Kwai, a WWII POW camp and even a Roman coliseum.

These complements were generally manufactured by small workshops. Many of them based at Valencia: Archer, Esteve Giner or La Artística. Or just anonymous, kind of humble carpenter's shops.

Figures were sold at toy shops or stores painted and packed loose in bags and in medium or large boxes with colorful drawings. Those with limited budgets could also buy the figures unpainted and cast in a lower quality plastic available from street vendors (piperos) or press stands (called "granjas" at the time). These pirate castings were mostly sold packed in paper envelopes under the brand Monta-Plex and were at its height during the late 1960s and early 1970s with hundreds of pirated figures from foreign brands such as Timpo, Elastolin, Airfix, Britains, Jean, Marx, etc. and even some Spanish too.



Different Spanish posters of movies, comic books and paper dolls from 1950s -1970s.





Rin-tin-tin comic book of the 1950s.

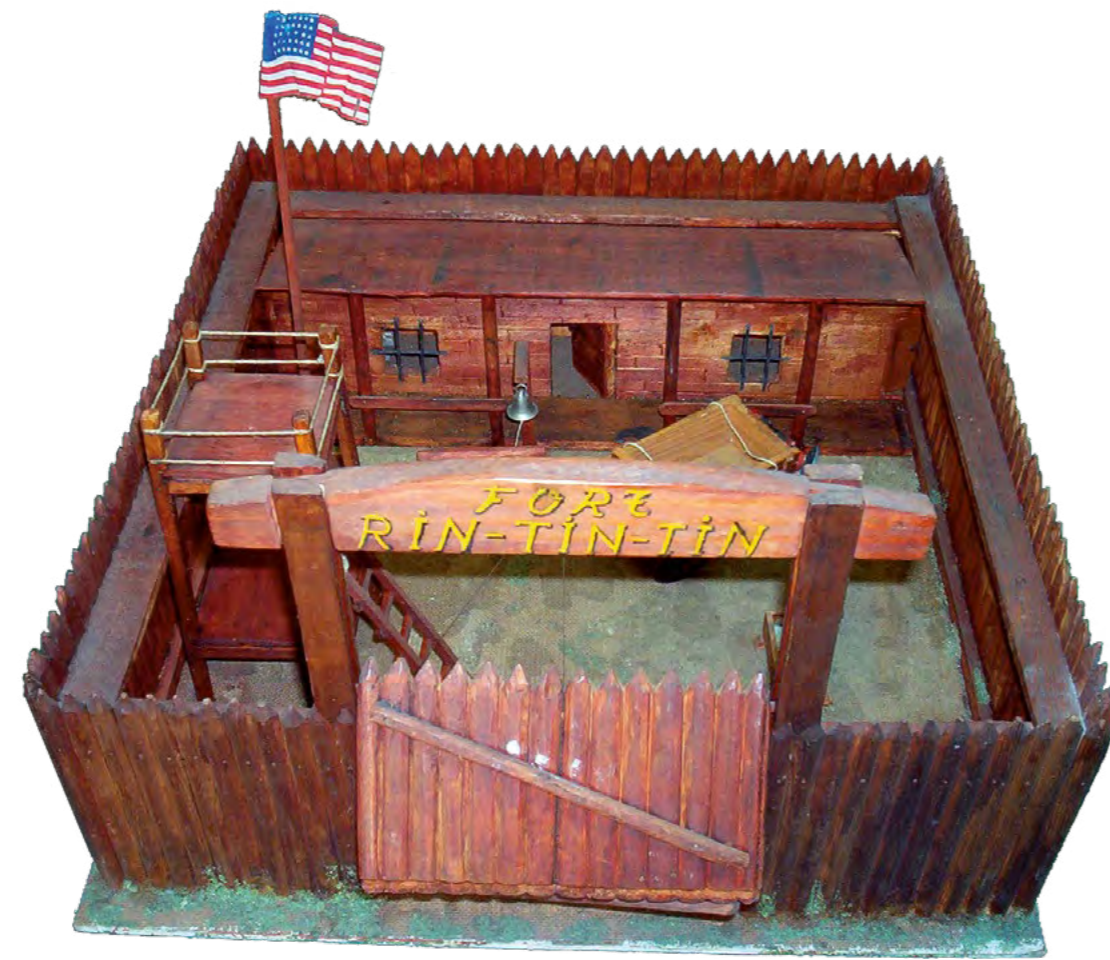
**“RIN-TIN-TIN” WITH MOVABLE HEADS (1957) 65 mm**

Removable heads were first used by José Capell with his lead figures and served to create some different models from the same body. Jaime Cuadradas went one step further, being years ahead of Britains in this concept. The English would later baptize it as “eyes right”. However in a similar way in which it happened with the “Swoppets” by Gama (see page 157) the Jecsan innovation passed unnoticed.

This series is outstanding and with a great realism. The only flaw I would mention is a painting error, as the blue shirts are lighter than the pants, when it should be the other way around.



Movable heads in action from the “Rin-Tin-Tin” series.



“Fort Rin-tin-tin”. Courtesy of Joan Camacho.

There are seven figures on horseback, ten on foot and two different “Rin-Tin-Tin” poses (running and sitting). They are very interesting and include a wounded soldier leaning on the ground or another standing at attention. They were produced in both rubber and plastic.

The Rin-Tin-Tin television series had great success in Spain. The protagonist was Corporal Rusty, a child who survived an Indian attack on a pioneer wagon train. He was a bugler in Fort Apache and was accompanied by Rin-Tin-Tin, a wily dog, pet of the 101st regiment of Cavalry.

Many Spanish firms, such as Pech Hnos., Comansi, Juguetes Moya, Agustín Teixidó or Reigon, launched their own collections of figures based on the same characters. But in my opinion, the best was Jecsan’s.

Later in 1962 Jecsan released this series again as a complement to their line of “movable heads”. They were the Corporals Boone and Rusty and Lieutenant Riple. Curiously enough this version of the figures have no movable heads (see page 222).

In addition, Jecsan marketed a varnished wooden fort called “Fort Rin-Tin-Tin”, with its opening gate and high palisades to the scale of the figures. This is one of the most beautiful among all those produced in Spain.



“Corporal Rusty” on horseback together with his comrades. Rubber and plastic 65 mm.



Original box of “Rin-tin-tin” series.



Early rubber versions of the figures alluded in the text. 65mm.



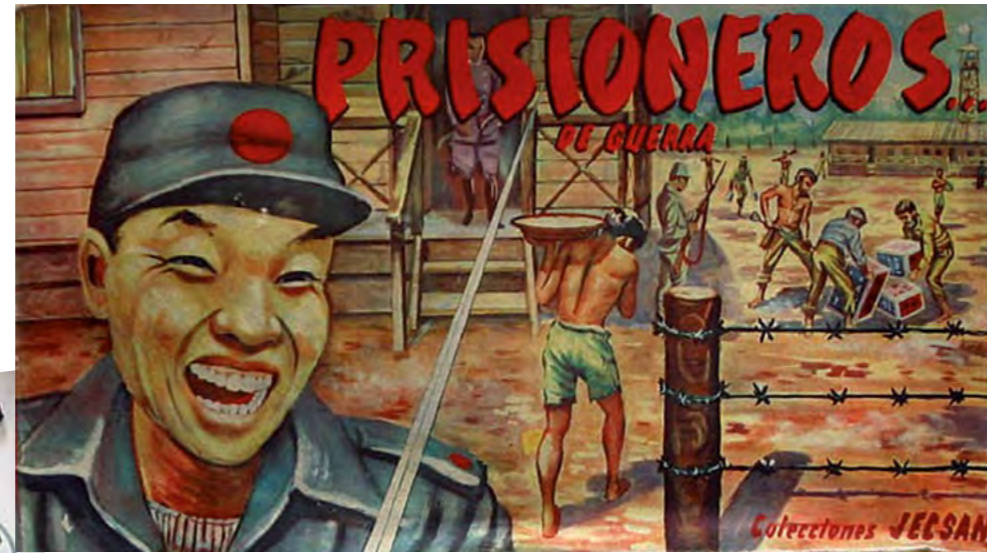
Early rubber versions of the figures alluded in the text. 65mm.



**“PRISIONEROS DE GUERRA” (1960) 60 mm**

Jecsan created this classic series from the movie “The Bridge on the River Kwai”. They are splendid figures designed by Castells.

At the same time they also released a wooden bridge produced by subcontracted companies in two sizes. The first was created specifically for the “Prisioneros de Guerra” in 60 mm. The other one was smaller and not made to an exact scale. (Image not available).



The box “Prisioneros de Guerra” containing twelve figures. It is one of the most valued among collectors from around the world.



Figure of the “Colonel Nicholson” played by Alec Guinness in the legendary film. Rubber, 60 mm.



Figure of the “Colonel Green” as performed by André Morell. Rubber, 60 mm.



Lid of one of the variants of the box of “El Puente Sobre el Rio Kwai”.



Original poster for the film “The Bridge on the River Kwai” directed by David Lean in 1957.

**JAPANESE INFANTRY (1960) 60 mm**

As Pech Hnos. and Jecsan used the same designer, Japanese soldiers produced for these two firms are often subject to confusion. Jecsan figures differ from those made by Pech Hnos. in that they wear helmets and leggings.

As it is the case with the Marines, they are exactly the same poses used with the 30 mm figures.



The Bridge on the River Kwai. Wood, 60 mm.



**TARZAN (1958) 54 mm**

This second "Tarzán" series in rubber is composed by eight figures in action created by Tomás Redondo. The new version of "Tarzan" showed him running with a knife, and it is much better than the first one. Tomás Redondo would use the same poses for an explorer in "África Misteriosa" and for a cowboy too. The series is completed with a gorilla and six African warriors with silver shields. They are all quite similar; only differing in the position of spears and legs.



**NATIVE AFRICAN DANCERS (1958) 70 mm**

I am crazy about this series. Six stylized natives dancing in a very expressive manner, bare-breasted and with a skirt in bright colors (gold, green, red and white). It was manufactured in rubber and plastic. They are fitted with metal rings simulating necklaces and bracelets.



**ANIMALS (1961) 50 mm - 60 mm**

As stated before, the particular green color used by Lafredo on many of its figures is really representative of this company. It was normally used on the bases though in the case of these figures, and perhaps because they are base-free the green color is present in eyes, hooves, and some other details.

Other significant features in most of these figures are the elongated bodies of the quadrupeds and of course the hairy texture.

Lafredo produced two lines of animals: "Animales Mayores" (big animals) with elongated bodies and the "Animales de la selva" (wild animals). The first series of animals were made in rubber and in 60 mm, they were varnished in a honey-color and had long bodies. Some of them, as the tiger or the panther, had two babies.

"Animales de la selva" are the same than those of "África Misteriosa" with no hairy texture and in 50 mm.



Family of tigers. Rubber, 60 mm.

Many of Lafredo's "Animales Mayores" are very similar to the Pech Hnos. Rubber, 60 mm.

"Animales de la Selva" series. Rubber, 50 mm.