

# 35.M Ansaldo - Hungarian light tank



The image comes from Source 3, page 13, where it bears the text:

*"Officer cadets of the Hungarian Ludowika Academy, with their Ansaldo tankettes, probably in 1941. Note the Czech tank overalls and the special cadet collar patches. The white-edged cross was red. (Martin Windrow)"*

It is one of the few pictures of the tank in Hungarian service that I have seen, which is why I have chosen to bring the picture here.

## **The story behind:**

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Fiat and Ansaldo factories developed a light tank - or as they were called at the time a tankette - i.e. a small tank. The starting point was a number of Carden-Loyd tankettes, which were partly imported from England and partly produced under license in Italy. The tank was intended for detection and security tasks and existed with different armaments, including for example a flamethrower version.

The tank was first used in combat during the campaign in Ethiopia in 1935 and was later used in the Spanish Civil War. It was exported to a large number of countries, including Hungary.

In connection with the build-up of armored units, the Hungarians explored the possibility of license-producing either German or Italian tanks, but this was not possible. It was therefore necessary to make definite purchases.

Hungary received its first 50 pcs. Fiat/Ansaldo Carro Veloce tankettes in 1936 - 30 in the CV 3/33 edition and 20 in the CV 3/35 edition. Additional 100 pcs. - in the CV 3/35 edition - arrived in 1937. Another 2 pcs. CV 3/35 was taken over from Germany after the dissolution of the Austrian army in 1938.

In Hungary, the 35.M, which were to be used as platoon transport vehicles, were rebuilt. A dome was mounted over the commander's place, just as it is shown on the SSP model.

It was also considered to mount a tower on the vehicle - however, it became far too heavy in relation to the weight of the vehicle, so the project was shelved.

There was no doubt in the Hungarian General Staff that the equipment acquisition did not equip the army with a modern tank. However, you had to make do with what was possible to acquire on the world market when you had to build an army largely from scratch.

During the mobilization, 35.M was part of the reconnaissance battalions in the army's two motorized brigades and two cavalry brigades - a company of 20. 35.M in each reconnaissance battalion. In addition, each brigade's cyclist battalion had an armored reconnaissance platoon with 5 units. 35.M.

However, the initial battles on the Eastern Front in July 1941 clearly showed that the 35.M was not a real tank and at the end of July they were withdrawn from front service and deployed in the vast hinterland in security tasks and partisan combat.

A significant weakness of Ansaldo 35.M was i.a. that the engine could only be started from the outside. (My assumption: With crank!) On that account, the armored battalion 1st Cavalry Brigade - at the end of July 1941 - lost 18 out of 23 tank crews, i.e. 36 men. Reason: When driving in difficult terrain, the tank had a tendency to stall. The crew had to abandon the vehicle to restart it, making excellent targets for Russian snipers. Among other things, this incident helped to convict 35.M Ansaldo from frontline service.

At the more curious end of the spectrum is that the 101st Engineer Battalion had a platoon Ansaldo 35.M. The battalion's main tasks were to lay out smoke and operate flamethrowers as well as laying out war gases and gas purification. Two of the tank division's vehicles were equipped with trailers for the transport of smoke generators and flamethrower fuel, but neither of these vehicles was used on active duty.

The Hungarians also received - for testing - the special flamethrower version of the Ansaldo tank; it remained in Hungary, despite the fact that no purchase agreement was concluded. Whether this flamethrower tank was also included in the 101st Engineer Battalion is unknown in history.

A number were still in Hungary, where they were part of educational and police units. The last combat action was thus during the battles in connection with the siege of Budapest in February 1945.

With regard to the Ansaldo 35.M, which were handed over to training and police units, the police received 10 units, which were rearmed from 2 units. 34/AM 8 mm Gebauer machine guns for 1 pc. light machine gun 31.M. The gendarmerie got 10 pcs. and Croatian anti-partisan forces received 10, but without armament.

## Ending:

Although it was a very light tank, equipped only with machine guns, it served from start to finish. Not a mean feat at all!

My project did not stop with this one model. I have also set up a completely light armored company.

**Read more about and see pictures of the Ansaldo 35.M and other Hungarian armored vehicles here:**

<http://mailer.fsu.edu/~akirk/tanks> - (See respectively under *Hungary* and *Italy*.)

<http://www.wwiivehicles.com/html/hungary/> - (Generally about Hungarian tanks.)

[http://www.wwiivehicles.com/html/italy/L3\\_CV33\\_L5\\_CV35.htm](http://www.wwiivehicles.com/html/italy/L3_CV33_L5_CV35.htm) - (Specifically about the Fiat/Ansaldo tankette.)

## Other sources:

*The Royal Hungarian Army 1920-1945, Volume II, Hungarian Mobile Forces* by Peter Mujzer, AxisEuropa Books, New York 2000, ISBN 1-891227-35-1