



## 39.M Csaba - Hungarian armored car

### The story behind

The progenitor of the armored car is the Hungarian engineer Nicolas Straussler - an exciting person who traveled to England in 1938 driving through Europe in a prototype of one of his armored cars, but without armament. In addition to being a skilled designer, he must also have been good at explaining himself - the story does not report anything about his possible problems at border crossings.

In England, the Alvis automobile factory built 50 armored cars of Nicolas Straussler's design, of which 12 were sold for use in the Dutch East Indies and 3 to Portugal. The Royal Air Force acquired 12 examples, some of which were in service with the armored car squadron at Aden in late 1940. Nicolas Straussler later invented the "duplex drive" system that was fitted to the amphibious version of first the Valentine and later the Sherman tank. Furthermore, he was also involved in the invention of demining equipment - and a minelayer of his design was tested but not adopted. All in all, an enterprising and inventive gentleman!

The Hungarian army, to return to the present case, received a demonstration of the prototype in June 1939 and an order for 11 experimental models as well as 50 armored cars M.39 and 12 pcs. M.40 (command edition) was issued. All were delivered in June 1940. It seems that there were 143 in total. M.39 and 12 pcs. M.40. Production was stopped when the Manfréd Weiss factory in Csépel was bombed on 27 July 1944.

Nicolas Straussler already designed his first armored car back in 1933, which was intended for the British army. The Manfréd Weiss factories built the armored car and the Hungarian army was very interested, they did not have the means to acquire it. In 1935, the Manfréd Weiss factories built two copies of a new and more advanced design. One copy was delivered to England, while the other remained in Hungary for further studies at the Hungarian version of HMAK (or with the then Danish designation Hærens Tekniske Korps).



The type designation became M.39 Csaba. The command version was designated M.40 and had extra radio equipment and a large frame antenna. The armored car was most likely named after one of the Hun king Attila's sons - Prince Csaba - who, according to tradition, is one of the ancestors of the Hungarian people (the Magyars). (My theory.)

The armament was 1 x 20 mm machine gun M.36 (anti-tank gun) from the Swiss company Solothurn as well as 1 x 8 mm machine gun M.34/37A M and 1 x 8 mm machine gun 31.M.

The first-mentioned machine gun was mounted next to the machine gun and, as on the Hungarian tanks of the time, the barrel was surrounded by a protective "tube". (This makes it much thicker than the machine gun itself, so it is not a clumsy reproduction of the coaxial gun shown on the model.) The latter machine gun was intended as an anti-aircraft machine gun and fired through two hatches at the rear of the turret!

The command version M.40 was equipped with a slightly smaller turret and had only 1 x 8 mm machine gun M.34/37A M as armament. Of this type, only the original 12 were built, but probably a number of damaged M.39s were converted to M.40 standard during the course of the war.

The M.39 and M.40 tanks served well throughout the war, although the advanced mechanics were at times vulnerable, not least in the hands of untrained personnel.

In 1943, an order was placed for an improved version - called Hunor - but there is no word on whether the 50 pcs. was produced not to mention delivered.

## Organisation

The armored vehicles were included in the units as follows:

- armored reconnaissance battalions (one company in each battalion, as well as two armored vehicles in the battalion staff)
- motorized reconnaissance battalions (a platoon in each battalion, as well as an armored car in the battalion staff).

## Painting

It is possible to paint the armored car in different versions:

1. Dark green with a dark sand and dark brown camouflage pattern.
2. Yellow (= ochre)

3. Dark blue (At least two copies which were delivered to the Police were painted dark blue.)

A further variant might also be possible:

4. Dark green - without camouflage paint

since also Csaba armored vehicles - like other armored vehicles - may have appeared only in factory paintwork.

As can be seen from the pictures, I have chosen variant 2 as "my" color and there were two reasons for that.

The first was that I wasn't quite sure how I wanted to paint the blur colors - I later overcame this fear when I painted my Zrinyi 105 assault guns and my M.35 Ansaldo tank.

The second reason was that the armored car would then go well with my then only other Hungarian armored vehicle - a German Hetzer tank fighter in Hungarian service.

Today, I would probably choose variant 1 - which is definitely the most exciting.

## My painting

(reconstructed from memory)

1. The armored car was spray painted with Humbrol 93 (Sand).
2. The tires and cooling fins were also painted in Humbrol 33 (Black). The latter only with one very thin color.
3. The model was then drybrushed with Humbrol 26 (Khaki) to create the illusion of ocher and subsequently with 53 (Gun metal) to give a metallic sheen.
4. When everything was crunchy - patience is necessary - I overpainted the model with a very thin turpentine solution of Humbrol 86 (olive green) to tone down the light sand color.
5. Finally, when everything was completely dry again, it was drybrushed with Humbrol 26 to give the model a little dusty impression.

In between steps 2 and 3, I painted nationality markings on the side, so that they could also get the various overpaints - but not so heavily that the marks disappeared completely. I also mounted a small transfer with the number "11" on the rear, so the car did have some unit marking... but it's hardly visible on the finished model.

## Sources

1. *Military Modelling, Vol. 28 No. 12 1998 AFV Modelling Special.*
2. *British Tanks and Fighting Vehicles 1914-1945* af B.T. White, Ian. Allen Ltd., London 1970.
3. *The Royal Hungarian Army 1920-1945, Volume II, Hungarian Mobile Forces* af Peter Mujzer, Axis Europa Books, New York 2000, ISBN 1-891227-35-1.
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5. *The Eastern Front, Armour Camouflage and Markings, 1941 to 1945* af Stephen Zaloga og James Grandsen, Arms and Armour Press, London 1983, ISBN 0-85368-583-5.
6. *Axis Allies on the Ostfront* af Bob Mackenzie, Tac Publications, Oxford 2001.

**Read more about and see pictures of the Csaba armored car here**

<http://www.axishistory.com>

<http://mailer.fsu.edu/~akirk/tanks/hun/Hungary.html>

Per Finsted