

"Honveds der Luft" - The Hungarian Air Force in Russia, 1941

Introduction

The German magazine "Der Adler", Nr. 23, from 18 November 1941, contains an article about the Hungarian Air Force under the heading "Honveds 1) der Luft - Ungarische Luftwaffe im Kampf gegen die Sowjets".

The photos in the article are attributed to the Hungarian Air Force and the photographer Oskar Pöffel.

In my translation of the captions, I have tried to retain the contemporary, somewhat florid style.

The article



"The alarm has gone off at a Hungarian field airfield. After the order to take off is given, the crews run out to their machines, to go on the wings against the Russians, to whom our allies have already added many a heavy blow."



*"After the attack on the Russian positions.
These Hungarian pilots have just returned from their combat mission and are now sharing their experiences.
Judging by the atmosphere, it was a task successfully completed."*

The Hungarian Air Force wore khaki uniforms. Officers and permanent non-commissioned officers wore a khaki-colored cap, with a brown leather shade, while conscripted non-commissioned officers and the crew wore a khaki-colored beret.

The badge in the cap was a crowned eagle, with outstretched wings. Officers' badge was in gold wire, while permanent non-commissioned officers wore a silver-grey metal wire badge. Conscripted NCOs and crew wore a similar fabric badge in their barrettes, with bronze colored thread.

In the center of the picture (back) is an airman wearing a khaki beret.



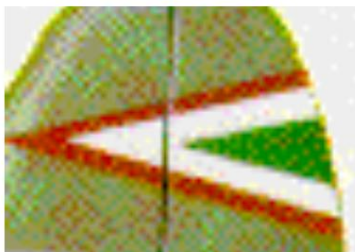
"Hungarian fighters - of the Fiat Cr 42 type - on a field airfield near the front, ready for action."

On two nearest fighter planes the squadron marking - *Sankt Georg* is visible, which identifies the two planes as belonging to the 4th Fighter Squadron in the 1st Fighter Regiment.

The yellow band behind the cockpit was a common symbol for all German and German-allied aircraft on the Eastern Front, making identification of friend or foe considerably easier.



"A light bomber of the Caproni Ca 135 type is ready to take off and the crew embarks."



IV. Bomb squadron (-) had 6 machines of the Ca 135 type. The machine's yellow identification band can be seen on the far right of the picture.

On the wing is the nationality mark, which was replaced later in the war by a white swastika on a black background.



"The commander of a victorious Hungarian fighter squadron; he himself is one of the most successful fighter pilots, who has become known in the Hungarian press especially for his great courage in the encounter with the enemy."

The sleeve insignia shows a captain of the air force - black base, golden border and angle and bars. Corresponding distinction was worn on the shoulder flaps of the uniform jacket.

At the bottom left of the picture, three airplane silhouettes can be seen, which in all probability mark victories.

The officer may be Captain László Tomor, who was the commander of the 3rd Fighter Squadron in the 1st Fighter Regiment, whose badge was the Ace of Hearts playing card.



"A light anti-aircraft gun from the Hungarian Air Force has just arrived at the forward field airfield, which it is supposed to secure against possible Russian air attacks."

The flying soldiers around the anti-aircraft gun (licensed 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun) are wearing the air force's khaki field uniform, with matching beret.

The Air Force's 1st Field Brigade

From July to November 1941, the units of the Hungarian Air Force which accompanied the army forces advancing into Russia were organized as follows:

Unit:	Aircraft types:
3. Fighter Squadron/1. Fighter regiment	9 pcs. Cr 42 fighters + 3 reserve aircraft
4. Fighter Squadron/1. Fighter regiment	9 pcs. Cr 42 fighters + 3 reserve aircraft
2. Fighter Squadron (-)/1. Fighter regiment	6 (or 7) pcs. Re 2000 fighters
III. Bomb Squadron (-)	A number of Ju 86 K-2 bombers

IV. Bomb Squadron (-)

6 pieces. About 135 bombers

I. Reconnaissance Squadron

6 pieces. He 46 reconnaissance aircraft + 2 reserve aircraft

III. Reconnaissance squadron 6 pcs. WM 21 reconnaissance aircraft + 2 reserve aircraft

1. Transport squadron

The aircraft types are not available - possibly Ju 52 transport aircraft or converted Ju 86 or Fw 58 bombers.

Aircraft types



A Cr 42 type fighter - from the 4th Fighter Squadron.



Fighter aircraft of the type Re 2000.



Ju 86 type bomber.



Bomber of the Ca 135 type.



Reconnaissance aircraft of the type He 46.



Reconnaissance aircraft of the type WM 21.



Transport aircraft of the type Ju 52.

The photograph shows the somewhat later nationality mark.



Bomber/transport aircraft of the type Fw58.

The photograph shows the somewhat later nationality mark.

The above image material comes from Source 7, which is able to deliver photographs and individual drawings of all aircraft types that served in the Hungarian Air Force.

Effort

During the four months that the 1st Field Brigade was at the front, it shot down 39 enemy aircraft; in addition, the anti-aircraft artillery accounted for a further 43 enemy aircraft.

The brigade's aircraft performed 1,454 *sorties* and 2,192 flying hours; 3rd Fighter Squadron alone accounted for well over 300 *sorties*. 217 tons of bombs were dropped.

The brigade had 17 dead, 6 missing and 28 wounded.

The brigade lost a total of 56 aircraft:

- 25 reconnaissance aircraft
- 14 fighters
- 11 bombers
- liaison aircraft 1
- transport aircraft 5

8 of the aircraft lost were lost in combat; the figures also include aircraft that were lost on the way from Hungary to the front as well as machines that were damaged between 20 and 90%.

A large number of experiences had also been gathered about the efforts of air forces in combat conditions, about being under operational command of army forces, about the rapid advance of land forces and the resulting problems with displacement of field airfields, and not least about the difficulties in maintaining a sufficiently high level of maintenance.

From a report, which was drawn up after the return home, it appears that almost all of the deployed aircraft types were designated as unsuitable for use on the Eastern Front, which, among other things, had been emphasized by the first encounter with winter.

However, it was not so straightforward to get new planes, so you had to make do with the material you now had. When an air force is sent to Russia in the summer of 1942 - in support of the 2nd Army - it is largely equipped with similar types of aircraft. However, there are now so many Re 2000 fighters that the biplane Cr 42 is transferred for training purposes.

Postscript

At the time the article in *Der Adler* was published, the Air Force's 1st Field Brigade was almost sent home. The last units reached Hungary on 26 November 1941.

Whether the article therefore serves as "a thank you for the effort" or was simply intended as ordinary, interesting material is not known. However, the coincidence in time is remarkable.

Uniforms



The captain (Julius Horváth) wears a khaki service uniform, with matching field cap (slanted cap), brown waist belt and brown lace-up boots. The uniform did not undergo any significant changes during the war, so the officers shown in the German article wear a similar uniform, though with a cap instead of a field cap.

The hat badge is worn on the left side of the field hat. The degree signs are carried on the shoulder pads - black bottom with edging, beams and angle in gold thread. The pilot wing is placed over the right breast pocket. The service pistol is of Hungarian manufacture - Frommer 39.M.

The lieutenant wears a German sheepskin aviator jacket over his service uniform. The boots are also made in Germany. On the left side of the field hat, the crowned eagle is carried in gold thread. Degree marks are worn on the sleeve of the flight jacket.

The winter flying suit was of black or brown leather and was worn with goggles and a packed parachute (initially Italian-made, later German). In the summer, a shirt uniform and canvas aviator helmet or a beige colored canvas aviator suit was used. Judging by the footage, the pilots in open machines wore the winter flight suit or the summer/service uniform in combination with a leather jacket.

The corporal is wearing a khaki field uniform and beret. The shoulder pads are black with graduations in silver-grey metal wire. The beret badge is also in silver-grey metal wire; the beret badge for conscripted commanders and privates was of bronze-colored metal wire. As an alternative to the beret, there was also a field hat (slanted hat). On the collar is a winged propeller badge made of silver-coloured metal. Belt and shoes are brown leather. The service pistol is of Hungarian manufacture - Frommer 39.M.

Sources

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9. *Re 2002* <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/2072/heja.html>.
10. *About Hungarian Air Force uniforms* <http://www.rathbonemuseum.com/HUNGARY/Hungary1.html> and <http://www.rathbonemuseum.com/HUNGARY/HgSgt/HgSgt.html>.
11. Various posts about uniforms in the debate forum <http://www.thirdreichforum.com>.

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Notes

- 1) *Honved* means (a private) soldier in Hungarian, and - with a capital letter - the Hungarian army.