

# The Hungarian infantry during the Second World War

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to give an impression of how the Hungarian infantry was uniformed immediately before and during the Second World War. At the same time, examples of the infantry's equipment and material are shown.

The image material comes from the relatively few sources available about the Hungarian army. Many details, especially about the material, are therefore currently unknown to me. If anyone has any further information, I'd love to hear about it.



## The soldiers

The image comes from Source 1, which was published in 1939. The fan in the image may thus be of the type that bore the model designation 38.M.

A copy of such a flag - that of the 15th Infantry Regiment - is today on display at the Hungarian Flag Museum in Budapest.

Find out more about the 15th Infantry Regiment tab on these pages:

<http://www.geocities.com/zaszlok/Muzeum> <http://fotw.vexillum.com/flags/hu^1949.html#1938>

The Army Act of 1938 laid the framework for a modernization and expansion of the armed forces, a plan which was to be completed in 1943. With this act, the restrictions that the Treaty of Versailles (the Trianon Treaty) had imposed on Hungary were finally done away with.



From the model year on the flag, I deduce that the flag was introduced as a visible symbol at the same time, analogous to the allocation of flags to the German armed forces in 1937.

However, it is not known to what extent the units in the period 1922 to 1938 had plumes.

In contrast to the parade picture, the infantrymen on the march look a little more field-like.

The image comes from Source 5. According to the caption, it is a scene from the march into Bessarabia, at the start of the march into Russia.



Judging by the soldiers' attire, combat does not appear to be imminent.

A group of Hungarian soldiers wearing uniform cloaks, and in the case of some tent flags/raincoats.

The steel helmet corresponds to the German model from the First World War.

The image comes from Source 7.



The soldiers have shed their cloaks, which are now worn rolled up, mainly over the left shoulder.

The image comes from Source 5.

### Support weapon



### Machine guns

The army's **light machine gun 31.M** originated from the Swiss arms factory Solothurn [1](#)). The caliber was 8mm. Each infantry company had 12 light machine guns.

For the machine gun there was also **an anti-aircraft gun 38.M**.

The image comes from Source 1.



The **8mm machine gun 7/31.M**, a holdover from the First World War, came from the Austrian arms factory Schwartzlose.

Due to its low rate of fire - 350 rounds per minute - the sources describe the machine gun as obsolete.

In comparison, the German MG34 had a cadence of 900 rounds per minute, while the MG42 went all the way up to 1,500. [2](#)

The image comes from Source 1.



## Mortars

The support weapon at company level was 2 pcs. **5 cm mortar 39.M**, which was manufactured by FÉG Fabrikken.

A total of 826 mortars of this type were issued to the units until 1944.

In 1942, the units that were part of the 2nd Arme were equipped with the German **5 cm mortar M36**.

The image comes from Source 5 [3](#).



The infantry battalions' machine gun company included 4 - and later 8 pcs. - **8 cm mortar 36.M**, manufactured by the state weapons factory in Diósgy.

The mortar was improved in 1939 - **8 cm mortar 36/39.M** - where the range was increased from 4,300 m to 6,200 m.

The image originates from the Internet; the soldiers look like Hungarians, but hardly are, as their field caps do not quite resemble the Hungarian model.

### Anti-tank

In virtually all accounts of the Hungarian army, the lack of effective armor is highlighted. On the German side, more or less half-hearted attempts were made to make up for this deficiency, but in this area too, the Hungarians were last in line; deliveries were often downgraded in favor of the Hungarians' hereditary enemies - the Romanians.



At company level, 1 item was also included. - later 2 pcs. - **2 cm anti-tank gun 36.M 4)**, manufactured by the Swiss factory Solothurn.

The anti-tank gun was towed by tanks or motor vehicles. It could also be transported on pack horses or sidecars on motorcycles.

The image comes from Source 1.



At battalion and regimental level, one had **the 3.7 cm anti-tank gun 36.M** or the special Hungarian variant **4 cm anti-tank gun 40.M**.

A truncated barrel from the license-produced 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns was used to give the anti-tank gun greater punch.

The picture was found on the Internet [5](#).



The German PAK 38 was given the designation **5 cm anti-tank gun 38.M** in the Hungarian army.

In 1942, the Hungarians received 54 pieces, which were assigned to the units in the 2nd Arme, where they were part of the anti-tank companies of the infantry regiments.

Most of the 2nd Army's equipment was lost at Stalingrad.

The image comes from Source 6.



Another picture of a **5 cm anti-tank gun 38.M** from Source 6.

In 1942, 2. Arme also received 6 pcs. **7.5 cm anti-tank gun 40.M** (the German PAK 40), as well as 245 pcs. captured Belgian 4.7 cm anti-tank guns (FRC), which were designated **36.M**.

During 1944, however, the Hungarians received a larger number of 7.5 cm anti-tank guns as well as a number of Panzerfaust and Panzerschreck.

## Uniforms

A general description of the Hungarian field uniform can be found in my paper *Hungarian Hussar Uniforms during the Second World War*, to which reference is made.

The infantry's green coat of arms was worn on the collar mirror of both the jacket and the cloak, as well as a triangular fabric badge on the left side of the hat.



*Lieutenant, 1941.*  
(Source 7)



*Second Lieutenant, 1944.*  
(Source 7)



*Hornblower, 1942.*  
(Source 7)

#### **Notes on the illustrations**

1. The lieutenant's uniform is perhaps reproduced as a legitimate maroon in color and should probably be in line with the other two illustrations.
2. The hornblower wears a traditional Austro-Hungarian cut, with a carpet roll and a cooking pot with a thornysteret attached to it. The wiring around the horn is shown in a murky brown color; maybe it should have been in the weapon color?
3. The second lieutenant is drawn after the first photograph of the 5 cm anti-tank gun 38.M, which is shown in Part f of this paper. The dating of the uniform should perhaps properly be 1942, when the 2nd Arme, which perished at Stalingrad, was equipped with the German anti-tank gun. However, this is not considered to have a significant impact on the appearance of the uniform.

## Sources

1. *Taschenbuch der Heere* by Kurt Passow, JF Lehman Verlag, Munich / Berlin, 1939.
2. *The Royal Hungarian Army, 1920 – 1945* by Leo WG Niehorster, Axis Europa Books, New York 1998, ISBN 1-891227-19-X.
3. *Axis Allies on the Eastern Front* by Bob Mackenzie, Tac Publications, Oxford 2001.
4. *The Royal Hungarian Army 1920-1945, Volume II, Hungarian Mobile Forces* by Peter Mujzer, Axis Europa Books, New York 2000, ISBN 1-891227-35-1.
5. *The Hungarian Army and Its Military Leadership in World War II* by Andris J. Kursietis, Axis Europa Books, New York 1999 (third revised and expanded edition), ISBN 1-891227-28-9. (<http://www.axiseuropa.com>)
6. *Germany's Eastern Front Allies 1941-45* by Peter Abbott & Nigel Thomas, Osprey Men-at-Arms 131, London 1982, ISBN 0-850454-751. ([http://www.ospreypublishing.com/title\\_detail.php?title=Q4751&ser=MAA](http://www.ospreypublishing.com/title_detail.php?title=Q4751&ser=MAA)) The book contains additional drawings of Hungarian uniforms.
7. *The Armed Forces of World War II - Uniforms, Insignia and Organization* by Andrew Mollo, Military Press, New York 1987, ISBN 0-517-54478-4.
8. *Army uniforms 1939-45* by Boris Mollo, Dansk Militærforlag, Hvidovre (no year, but approximately 1980), ISBN 87-87794-00-4.

Per Finsted

- 1) During the war, 2,000 units were purchased in Germany. 7.92 mm Madsen recoilless rifles and 2,000 pcs. German 7.92mm light machine guns MG34. The Hungarian model designations became **24/43.M** and **34.M** respectively .
- 2) The information on MG34 and MG42 comes from: *Uniforms and Traditions of the German Army 1933-1945, Vol. 3* by John R. Angolia and Adolf Schlicht, San Jose, CA 1987, ISBN 0-9112138-38-8.
- 3) The caption reads: "*While German Hetzer tank destroyers stand in the background, Hungarian officer candidates line the roadside in support. These officer candidates were withdrawn from the fighting near Budapest shortly before the encirclement of the capital, and transferred en-masse into the forming 25th SS Grenadier Division "Hynyadi". This occurred in November, 1944 while this picture was taken in October just south of the capital.*"
- 4) Due to its relatively low penetration effect, the weapon system gradually fell out of use as an infantry weapon. However, the cannon on the Toldi light tank and the Csaba armored car were of the same type.
- 5) The image is probably from the book *The Eastern Front - Armor Camouflage and Markings 1941-1945* by Steven J. Zaloga and James Grandsen, Arms & Armor Press, London 1983, ISBN 0-85368-583-5. Here is the caption: "The Hungarian Army license-produced the Krupp Protze Kfz 70. This example from the 1st Armored Division is seen here towing a 40 mm 40.M anti-tank gun, a weapon that was derived from the German Pak 36 but with a 40mm Bofors tube. The tactical insignia for an anti tank company is clearly evident on the Protze. In the background is a Hungarian Pz Kpfw 38(t). Whether it is a 3.7 cm or a 4 cm anti-tank gun, however - in my opinion - cannot be determined from the photograph alone