

TAC NEWS

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"CASE GREEN"

The Invasion of Czechoslovakia - 10 October 1938

The Czech Crisis

The "Anschluss", or unification of Austria and Germany took place on the night of 11 March 1938 when Chancellor Schuschnigg surrendered to German pressure and "invited" the German army to move into his country and restore order. It was to be the first and last example of a state being conquered by telephone. The story of the Anschluss requires its own telling. But the facts in evidence pertaining to this article are plain. It outflanked the next state on Hitler's list, Czechoslovakia. Once again Hitler would make use of national self-determination to confuse the issue, as 3,500,000 German-speakers organized by a Nazi henchman, Konrad Henlein, inhabited the Czech borderlands in the Sudeten Mountains. Already on 20 February, before the Anschluss, Hitler had denounced the Czechs for allegedly persecuting this German minority.

On 21 April he ordered Keitel to prepare for the invasion of Czechoslovakia by October even if the French should intervene. Chamberlain was intent on appeasing Hitler, but this meant "educating" him to seek redress of grievances through negotiation, not force. He issued a stern warning to Germany during the spring war scare while pressuring Benes to compromise with Henlein. Germany, however, had instructed Henlein to display obstinacy, thereby preventing agreement. In August a worried British Cabinet dispatched the elderly Lord Walter Runciman to mediate. The program of concessions he finally arranged with Czech President Benes was rejected by Henlein. As the prospect of war increased, British appeasers grew more frantic. General Edmund Ironside, ruing the prime minister's reluctance to rearm, sneered that "Chamberlain is of course right...We cannot expose ourselves now to a German attack. We simply commit suicide if we do." And a shocking Times editorial called for the partition of Czechoslovakia, a view shared by Hitler at the Nuremberg party rally, where he condemned "Czechia" as an "artificial state." Chamberlain then journeyed to Berchtesgaden and proposed

to give the Germans all they demanded. Hitler, nonplussed, spoke of the cession of all Sudeten areas at least 80 percent German and agreed not to invade while Chamberlain won over Paris and Prague.

The French, led by Premier Edouard Daladier, agreed. The Czechs, however, resisted handing over their border fortifications to Hitler until 21 September, when the British and French made it clear that they would not support Czech resistance. Chamberlain flew to Bad Godesberg the next day to be met by new demands for the entire Sudetenland to be ceded to Germany in less than a week. The Czechs, however, were fully mobilized by 23 September and refused. Chamberlain returned home in a funk: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing." But his sorrowful address to Parliament was interrupted by the news that Mussolini had proposed a conference to settle the crisis peacefully. Hitler agreed, having seen how little enthusiasm there was in Germany for war and on the advice of Göring, Joseph Goebbels, and the generals. Chamberlain and Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, flew to Munich on 29 September. The awkward and pitiful Munich Conference ended on the 30 September. The Czechs were to evacuate all regions indicated by an international commission by 10 October and were given no recourse. The Czechs agreed. They had no recourse. They could have fought, could Czechoslovakia be defended?

Overview of Czechoslovak and German Forces

The organization, training, and equipment of the Czech army reflected the close ties between that country and France throughout the short life of the republic since the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after WWI. It not only embraced the French concept of "Collective Security", but also copied both French army defensive doctrine and its faith in the value of fixed defenses. In October 1938 it included the

equivalent of forty-five divisions. Though some had not received their full complement of manpower or modern weapons, the overall quality of these units was remarkably good. The Czechs had never felt secure within their borders, which often ignored traditional ethnic boundaries and were often not based on clear geographic boundaries like mountain ranges or large rivers. Therefore the level of training was high. In addition, the world famous Skoda arms works produced first quality artillery of all types and the Czech motor industry was as up to date as any in middle Europe.

Twenty-six of the country's divisions (19 Infantry, 1 motorized, and 1 mixed armored/cavalry "Fast" divisions) were grouped into four Field Armies. Nineteen divisions worth of troops were distributed among various defensive sectors and border fortifications in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. There were, in addition, three partially filled out "Fast" divisions, one motorized division, and an infantry division in General Reserve. A fourth "Fast" division could have easily been assembled in short order from various non-divisional tank and motorized units if war broke out. Opposing this, the Germans planned to deploy an Army Group made up of the 2nd, 8th, 10th, 12th, and 14th Armies. This force consisted of 24 infantry divisions, three panzer divisions, five motorized divisions, and three mountain divisions, all of which were at about 88% of full strength. There were also three "Light" divisions, units of questionable effectiveness consisting of a tank battalion of sixty eight PzI's and PzII's, a motorized recon battalion, four motorized artillery batteries, three battalions of cavalry, and small anti-tank and engineer support elements. Finally, there were five poorly equipped "Landwehr" divisions unfit for anything but security duties. Both the Czech and German armies would need to requisition considerable numbers of civilian vehicles to operate, but the Germans had a larger pool of these to draw on than the Czechs.

CZECH DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

Czech infantry divisions came in two types. Earlier on, there were "square" divisions consisting primarily of two infantry brigades of two regiments each with various support elements. Later these were augmented or replaced by "triangular" divisions consisting of three infantry regiments and support units.

"Square" Infantry Division

(Organized for GHQ's Micro Armour®: The Game - WWII)

Infantry Company: 4 x Infantry Platoon
Support Company: 3 x Light Machinegun (LMG) Platoon,
2 x Medium Machinegun (MMG) Platoon
Anti-Tank Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-tank Gun Platoon/Horse Drawn
Anti-Aircraft Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-Aircraft Gun Platoon/Horse Drawn

Infantry Battalion: 1 x Infantry "HQ" Platoon, 3 x Infantry Company, 1 x Support Company,
1 x 81mm Mortar Battery(3)
Artillery Battalion: 3 x 75mm vz18 Battery(3)/Horse Drawn
or 3 x 100mm vz14/19 Howitzer Battery(3)/Horse Drawn
Heavy Artillery Battalion: 2 x 149mm vz25 *or* vz37 Howitzer Battery(3)/Horse Drawn

Infantry Regiment: 1 x Infantry "GHQ" Platoon/Horse Mounted, 3 x Infantry Battalion

Infantry Brigade: 1 x Infantry "GHQ" Platoon/Truck, 2 x Infantry Regiment,
1 x Anti-Tank Company, 1 x Anti-Aircraft Company

Division: 2 x Infantry Brigade, 3 x Artillery Battalion, 2 x Heavy Artillery Battalion,
1 x Tancik vz33 Tankette Platoon[R]

"Triangular" Infantry Division

Infantry Company: 4 x Infantry Platoon
Support Company: 3 x Light Machinegun (LMG) Platoon,
2 x Medium Machinegun (MMG) Platoon
Pioneer Company: 4 x Engineer Infantry
Anti-Tank Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-tank Gun Platoon/Horse Drawn
Anti-Aircraft Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-Aircraft Gun Platoon/Horse Drawn
Recon Group: 1 x Tancik vz33 Tankette[R] *or* 1 x OA vz30 Armored Car[R]

Infantry Battalion: 1 x Infantry "HQ" Platoon, 3 x Infantry Company, 1 x Support Company,
1 x 81mm Mortar Battery(3)
Artillery Battalion: 3 x 75mm vz18 Battery(3)/Horse Drawn
or 3 x 100mm vz14/19 Howitzer Battery(3)/Horse Drawn
Heavy Artillery Battalion: 2 x 149mm vz25 *or* vz37 Battery(3)/Horse Drawn

Infantry Regiment: 1 x Infantry "GHQ" Platoon/Horse Mounted, 3 x Infantry Battalion,
1 x Anti-Tank Company, 1 x Anti-Aircraft Company

Division: 3 x Infantry Regiment, 3 x Artillery Battalion, 2 x Heavy Artillery Battalion,
0-1 x Pioneer Company, 1 x Recon Group

"Fast" Division

Dragoon Company: 4 x Infantry Platoon/Horses
Dragoon Support Company: 3 x LMG Platoon/Horses, 2 x MMG Platoon/Pack Horses
Motorized Company: 4 x Infantry Platoon/Truck
Motorized Support Company: 3 x LMG Platoon/Truck, 2 x MMG Platoon/Truck
Cycle Company: 4 x Infantry Platoon/"Cycle"
Tank Company: 4 x LT vz35 *or* LT vz38
Light Tank Company: 4 x LT vz34
Anti-Tank Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-Tank Gun/Horse *or* Truck towed
Heavy Anti-Tank Company: 4 x 47mm vz38 Anti-Tank Gun/Truck
Armored Car Company: 3 x OA vz30 Armored Cars[R]
Anti-Aircraft Company: 4 x 37mm vz37 Anti-Aircraft Gun Platoon/Truck

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Mounted Regiment: | 1 x Infantry "HQ" Platoon/Horses, 3 x Dragoon Company, 1 x Dragoon Support Company, 1 x 81mm Mortar Battery(3)/Pack Horses |
| Motorized Regiment: | 1 x Infantry "HQ" Platoon/Truck, 3 x Motorized Company, 1 x Motorized Support Company, 1 x 81mm Mortar Battery(3)/Truck |
| Cycle Regiment: | 1 x Infantry "HQ" Platoon/"Cycle", 3 x Cycle Company |
| Tank Battalion: | 3 x Tank Company |
| Artillery Battalion: | 2 x 75mm vz18 Battery(3)/Horse Drawn |
| Motor Artillery Battalion: | 3 x 100mm vz37 Howitzer Battery(3)/Truck |
| Mounted Brigade: | 1 x Infantry "GHQ" Platoon/Truck, 2 x Mounted Regiment, 1 x Cycle Regiment, 1 x Artillery Battalion, 1 x Anti-Tank Company |
| Mechanized Brigade: | 1 x Infantry "GHQ" Platoon/Truck, 2 x Tank Battalion, 2 x Motorized Regiment, 1 x Motor Artillery Battalion, 1 x Anti-Tank Company |
| Division: | 1 x Mechanized Brigade, 1 x Mounted Brigade, 1 x Heavy Anti-Tank Company, 1 x Armored Car Company, 1 x Light Tank Company, 1 x Anti-Aircraft Company |

Notes:

- 1) HQ and GHQ "Platoons" represent the "Command" portion of larger staff and administrative units.
- 2) "Cycles" were originally Bicycles. Cycle units began switching to Motorcycles as these became available.
- 3) Tank Companies consisted of three platoons, each of four tanks and a headquarters platoon, also of four tanks.
- 4) Anti-Tank and Anti-Aircraft Platoons consist of four guns each, for a total of six teen in the company.
- 5) Czech mortar or artillery batteries consisted of three sections of two mortars/guns, a total of six "tubes" per battery.
- 6) Anti-Tank and Anti-Aircraft Platoons consist of four 37mm guns each, for a total of six teen guns.
- 7) Recon Groups consist of Tankette Platoons of three vz33's or Armored Car Platoons of four OA vz30's.
- 8) The symbol [R] is used to denote "Recon" units possessing higher individual initiative than other troops.
- 9) Armored Car Companies consisted of two platoons, each of three vehicles and a headquarters platoon with four.
- 10) You may replace 75mm vz18's with 76.5mm vz30's.
- 11) The 100mm in the rulebook is the model vz14/19. The 149mm Howitzer in the book is the model vz25.
- 12) LMG Platoons consisted of six teen two-man machinegun teams. MMG Platoons consisted of four guns each.
- 13) You may divide up the Battalion LMG platoons among the three infantry companies or keep them together.
In actual practice, battalion LMGs were often parceled out, one per infantry squad.

Updated Czech Weapons Data

The following weapons should be added to the Czechoslovak weapons section of *Micro Armour*® : *The Game - WWII* (pg. 31)

| Weapon | Points | Firepower AP/HE | Range AP/HE | Defense (armored) | Speed W/T/F | Cargo Capacity | Transport Requirement |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Armored Fighting Vehicles | | | | | | | |
| Tancik vz33§ | 15 | 2 / 3 | 5 / 5 | [1] | 8T | - | - |
| LT vz34 | 24 | 4 / 4 | 8 / 5 | [2] | 10T | - | - |
| LT vz35 | 27 | 4 / 4 | 8 / 5 | [2] | 11T | - | - |
| LT vz38 | 31 | 5 / 4 | 10 / 5 | [3] | 11T | - | - |
| MT vz39 | 47 | 6 / 4 | 15 / 15 | [3] | 11T | - | - |
| Anti-Tank Weapons | | | | | | | |
| 37mm vz34§ | 11 | 3 / 3 | 5 / 5 | 5** | 1F | - | 4 |
| 37mm vz37§ | 20 | 5 / 4 | 8 / 8 | 5** | 1F | - | 4 |
| 40mm vz30§ | 30 | 5 / 4 | 15 / 15 | 4 | 0 | - | 6 |
| 47mm vz38§ | 28 | 6 / 4 | 12 / 12 | 4 | 0 | - | 6 |
| Artillery | | | | | | | |
| 75mm vz18§(3) | 92 | 1 / 5‡ | 48 / 48 | 4 | 0 | - | 6 |
| 76.5mm vz30/39§(3) | 208 | 2 / 5‡ | 96 / 96 | 4 | 0 | - | 8 |
| 81mm vz36§(3) | 61 | 0 / 6‡ | 29 / 29 | 6** | 2F | - | 8 |
| 100mm vz14/19§(3) | 215 | 2 / 7‡ | 78 / 78 | 3 | 0 | - | 8 |
| 100mm vz30/34§(3) | 269 | 2 / 7‡ | 98 / 98 | 3 | 0 | - | 8 |
| 105mm Schneider§(3) | 338 | 3 / 8‡ | 101 / 101 | 3 | 0 | - | 10 (Mle.13) |
| 149mm vz14/16§(3) | 227 | 2 / 9‡ | 68 / 68 | 2 | 0 | - | 10 |
| 149mm vz25§(3) | 341 | 3 / 9‡ | 94 / 94 | 2 | 0 | - | 12 |
| 149mm vz37§(3) | 471 | 4 / 9‡ | 120 / 120 | 2 | 0 | - | 12 |

| Weapon | Points | Firepower AP/HE | Range AP/HE | Defense (armored) | Speed W/T/F | Cargo Capacity | Transport Requirement |
|---|--------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 105mm vz35§(3) | 490 | 3 / 8‡ | 147 / 147 | 3 | 0 | - | 10 |
| (The 105mm vz35 was manufactured in large numbers and used extensively by the Wehrmacht.) | | | | | | | |
| Anti-Aircraft Weapons | | | | | | | |
| 37mm vz37 | 24 | 4 / 6 | 10 / 10 | 4 | 0 | - | 6 |
| Armored Cars | | | | | | | |
| OA vz30 | 17 | 0 / 4 | 1 / 5 | [1] | 18W | - | - |
| Personnel | | | | | | | |
| Infantry HQ/GHQ | 39 | 0 / 3 | 0 / 5 | 6** | 3F | - | 8 |
| Infantry | 10 | 0 / 4 | 0 / 5 | 6** | 3F | - | 8 |
| LMG Platoon | 12 | 0 / 6 | 0 / 5 | 6** | 3F | - | 8 |
| MMG Platoon | 14 | 0 / 4 | 1 / 10 | 6** | 2F | - | 4 |
| Cavalry | 9 | 0 / 3 | 0 / 5 | 5** | 8F | - | - |
| Cavalry Support | 14 | 0 / 4 | 1 / 10 | 5** | 6F | - | - |
| Bicycle Infantry | 12 | 0 / 4 | 1 / 5 | 6** | 3F (3W) | - | 8 |
| Motorcycle Infantry | 22 | 0 / 4 | 1 / 5 | 6** | 20W | - | - |
| Transport | | | | | | | |
| Saddle Horses | 2 | - | - | 5** | 8F | 8 | - |
| Horse Drawn Limber | 4 | - | - | 1 | 6F | 12 | - |
| Tatra 92 (2Ton) Truck | 8 | - | - | 1 | 16W | 10 | - |
| Tatra Half Track | 7 | - | - | 1 | 12T | 8 | - |

Notes

- 1) The Czechs used "Mounted Infantry" in their "Fast Divisions". Only infantry trained to use them may do so. They "Mount", "Dismount", and otherwise function in all ways just like any other transport stands.
- 2) Bicycle Infantry may either walk (3F) or ride (3W). Riding allows them to double their movement rate on good roads.
- 3) The "Cargo Capacity" of limbers is for towing purposes only.

Modeling the Czech Army Using GHQ Micro Armour® Models

A considerable expansion of the GHQ product line over the past few years has made modeling the 1938 Czech Army possible with very little effort and only a few minor substitutions. Czech infantry uniforms, for instance were quite similar in appearance to those worn by the Polish Army of 1939 (GHQ SKU#s **P6** and **P7**). The main differences being a slightly different helmet shape, a slightly lighter overall "brown" color in use by the Czechs, and the fact that Czech "puttees" ran only halfway up the calf, whereas the Poles wrapped their calves to just below the knee. Polish Cavalry uniforms, however, were quite distinctive and should not be used for Czechs. GHQ Soviet Cavalry figures (**R32**) will do better since they use a "round" helmet similar to the Czech type.

As for vehicles, the Tancik vz33 can be represented by the Polish TKS Tankette (**P1**), which was very similar in appearance. The LT vz34 (**G131**), vz35 (**G131**), vz38 (**G7**), and MT vz39 (**G7**) shared many common visual characteristics and can be easily differentiated by using different paint schemes to prevent confusion on the tabletop. The OA vz30 Armored Car presents a problem, but I simply use the Polish WZ29 (**P4**) since it had similar armament and performance. Motorcycles, of course, are a problem. But, no one will complain if you use Germans (**G141**) for these. The Tatra 92 (2Ton) Truck looked a lot like the Soviet GAZ (**R42** 4x4) truck, which itself was a Ford knockoff. There was also a Tatra Half-Track that looked a good deal like the Polish Tatra C7P Prime Mover (**P9**).

Then there are the "Guns". The 75mm vz18 is the same weapon as the Polish "Armata Polowa" vz 1897 (**P10**), a horse drawn French 75mm mle.1897. The 76.5mm vz30/39 bears a striking resemblance to the French 75mm mle.36 (**FR12**) The

105mm "Schneider" mle.13 was common all over Europe in the '30s, and the Italian 100mm "Obise" (**IT20**) makes a good-looking Czech 100mm vz14/19. Other artillery weapons can simply be "Off Map" or represented by other weapons as you see fit. For AA Guns, the Czech 37mm vz37 AA can be represented by the Soviet 37mm M39 (**R47**).

The final problem, and in my opinion the biggest, is Czech anti-tank guns. The 37mm vz37 and 47mm vz38 were distinctive in appearance. Until such time as GHQ makes a Czech 47mm gun, I recommend the Bofors 37mm gun (**P11**). This piece, although nothing like the Czech guns, is at least very different in appearance from any other gun of the period. There is also a point of historical trivia to be considered. When the Czechs realized that war with Germany was a distinct possibility. They cast about Europe in search of sources for effective weapons. One of the biggest Czech import contracts went to Bofors of Sweden for their 37mm ATG. The contract could not be fulfilled because Germany annexed Czechoslovakia before the weapons could be delivered. Germany tried to take over the contract. But due to Germany's awful credit rating in 1939, the Swedes wouldn't go for it. It was the UK that picked up the option, which is why nearly half the 2lbr ATGs used by the UK in North Africa during 1941 were not 2lbs at all but Bofors 37s! Had the Czechs opted to resist the Germans, the contract might have been fulfilled, making the Bofors 37 a Czech standard ATG after all.

The possibility of war between Czechoslovakia and Nazi Germany is one of the great "What ifs" of WWII. The Czechs were well armed, well trained, well motivated, and well dug-in. In my opinion, Hitler would not have found Prague as easy to take as Warsaw, or even Paris.