

TAC NEWS

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THE HUNGARIANS ON THE EASTERN FRONT (1942-1943)

1941: Preamble

Hitler exhibited little excitement over Hungary's contribution to the war. His primary concern vis-à-vis Budapest was their capacity to provide the Wehrmacht with grain, bauxite, and oil, not soldiers. In addition, Hungary's economic infrastructure and military establishment were simply not up to waging a modern war. Two thirds of the country was without electricity with over a million illiterate adults. During the first months of Hungarian participation their contingent consisted of little more than 36,000 troops whose "armored fist" consisted of no more than a handful of "Balilla" (Italian M3/35) tankettes. Many of their "mobile" units depended on bicycle transport and, when the autumn rains came, the infamous Russian "Rasputitsa" (sea of mud) virtually paralyzed their ability to maneuver or even feed and clothe even this modest force.

In order to perform any sort of combat role, the Hungarians were obliged to beg their German allies to provide them with even the most basic military hardware. Most of this consisted of French and Polish gear captured in 1939 and 1940 in a hopelessly varied "mishmash" of random types and calibers for which "spare parts simply did not exist". After only two months of war in the East, 50% of this had broken down and had to be abandoned. Though casualties had been light (only 478 dead), Admiral Horthy, the Hungarian commander in chief, petitioned Hitler to allow his troops to return home. By December 1941 the "Carpathian Group", as the Hungarian expeditionary force was called, was back in Hungary.



Admiral Horthy

1942: The

Nightmare Begins

In early 1942, with German casualties mounting and Soviet resistance stiffening, Hitler decided that large numbers of Hungarian soldiers might be useful after all and issued a demand for Budapest to provide twenty-eight full strength divisions for service in the East. Admiral Horthy pleaded that a force of this size was quite beyond his country's capacity and that weapons and equipment for it would have to be provided by the Germans. Hitler promised up-to-date equipment and supplies and Horthy agreed to mobilize 220,000 men for combat service along with 40,000 occupation troops and 37,000 laborers (mostly Jewish slaves). This force became known as the Second Hungarian Army, the First Army being retained at home to discourage a Rumanian invasion! The Germans laid down harsh guidelines for the employment of this force. They were forbidden to take any war booty or employ Soviet POW labor. They were also required to pay full price for all German equipment provided!

By July 1942 nine Hungarian "Light" Infantry and one Mechanized Division were dispatched to the East. Logistic foul-ups forced them to detrain a full 600 kilometers from the front, forcing them to march the rest

of the way! When they reached the Don north of Stalingrad and deployed next to the German Eighth Corps, they were exhausted and demoralized. The "up-to-date" German equipment they had been promised turned out to be primarily rejects from German repair depots. By year's end there were a quarter million Hungarians in Russia consuming a full 75% of all Hungarian weapons, aircraft, and transport.

1943: Disaster

In January 1943, the Hungarians were deployed on a 186-kilometer front north of Stalingrad. They were stretched critically thin with no reserve of their own. German units deployed behind them were part of a separate chain of command, meaning that any assistance from them would have to go through "channels" (which generally meant they were ignored). Frightful cold and deep snow meant that vital supplies such as winter clothing, firewood, fuel, food, and ammunition could not be brought up. Hungarian artillery pieces were limited to an average of four rounds per day!

By Christmas, the Italian Alpini Division on the Hungarian right broke. Soon the entire front was crumbling. General Gustáv Jány (The Hungarian commander) requested permission to withdraw to prevent his force from being overwhelmed, which was denied! He then requested that the Hungarian Armored Division be released from reserve. This too was denied. The breakthrough came on 12 January. The Soviets crossed the Don under cover of dense fog and attacked all along the front. Hungarians, Italians, and Germans fled together in a vast human flood. Snow drifts ten to fourteen feet deep made cross-country movement

impossible, forcing the fugitives to pack the few roads. Men simply threw away their arms. Official Hungarian casualties were 6,076 killed, 14,682 wounded 973 captured, and over 57,000 missing! In addition, 23,000 Jewish laborers simply disappeared. Later investigations have confirmed that all these figures are approximately 50% of actual losses. The remnants of 2nd Army gathered at Kiev after a 1,000-kilometer rout. They had suffered the worst defeat in Hungarian history since the Turkish debacle of 1526! German opinion was universally harsh. "The Hungarians", they said, "were more trouble than they were worth."

1944-1945: Aftermath

In April 1943, Admiral Horthy met with Hitler at Salzburg. At this meeting, Horthy refused to provide another army for the Eastern Front and pressed Hitler to release the 2nd Army from German service. Hitler agreed. 2nd Army had become little more than a ragged, demoralized, and even mutinous mob. By May, most of them had returned to Hungary except for a small occupation force in the Ukraine, which acquired the nickname, the "Dead Army". The German army crossed the Hungarian frontier on 18 March 1944 in "Operation Margarethe" and a new Hungarian "puppet" government was established on 22 March. On 21 October 1944, all Hungarian troops were absorbed into German commands. The Red Army converged on Budapest by Christmas. 800,000 civilians and 70,00 troops (of which a little less than half were Germans) settled in for a siege. The Soviets occupied Pest on 18 January 1945 and Buda on 13 February. By 4 April there were no organized Axis troops on Hungarian territory. Hungary's war was over.

1st Hungarian Armored Division (1942-1943)

For wargamers, the 1st Hungarian Armored Division is both a useful and interesting formation, and offers some real insight into the workings of Germany's Eastfront allies. GHQ is coming out with WWII Hungary Micro Armour in Spring 2006. New releases will include all the models needed to field the 1st Armored Division, including the Csaba armored car, Toldi and Turan tanks, Zyrlini assault gun, and even the Nimrod AA tank. These combined with other GHQ products will allow you to build and deploy this unit on the miniature battlefield.



Illustrated on the next page, you will find the necessary TO&E information required for Micro Armour®: The Game - WWII. Further such tables for Hungarian forces will be included in the updated "GHQ Wargames" website as this goes online over the coming months. We hope you find this information useful, enlightening, and enjoyable!

1ST ARMORED DIVISION (OCT '42 - MAR '43)

Lt Tank Co: 4xTuran-I 40.M
 Med Tank Co: 1xPz.IIIJ, 3xTuran-I 40.M
 Hvy Tank Co: 1xPz.IVF2, 2xPz.IVF1
 or Turan-II 41.M
 Motorized Inf Co: 4xInfantry/Truck,
 1xMedium MG/Truck
 Support Co: 2x37mm PAK.35/Truck,
 3xMMG/Truck, 1xNimrod
 1x81mm Mortar(2)/Truck,
 Motorcycle Co: 4xMotorcycle Infantry[R],
 1xM'cycle Medium MG[R]
 Recon Co: 4xInfantry[R]/Truck,
 1xMedium MG[R]/Truck,
 1x37mm PAK.35/Truck
 Armored Car Co: 3xCsaba 39.M[R]
 Engineer Co: 3xEngineer/Truck,
 1xMedium MG/Truck
 1st Tank Bttn: 2xLight Tank Co,
 2xHeavy Tank Co, 1xPz.IB[R]
 2nd Tank Bttn: 2xLight Tank Co,
 2xMedium Tank Co, 1xPz.IB[R]
 Motorised Inf Bttn: 1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
 3xMotorized Infantry Co,
 1xSupport Co
 Recon Bttn: 1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
 1xMotorcycle Co, 1xRecon Co,
 1xArmored Car Co
 Armored Rgt: 1xPzBefW.1 (GHQ), 1st Tank Bttn,
 2nd Tank Bttn,
 1xNimrod 36/40.M SPAA,
 1xToldi-II 42.M[R]
 Motorized Rgt: 1xInfantry (GHQ)/Truck,
 3xMotorized Infantry Bttn,
 1xEngineer Co
 Armored Div: 1xArmored Rgt,
 2xMotorized Infantry Rgt,
 1xRecon Bttn

Division Assets

2xArtillery Bttn: @ 1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
 3x105mm 40.M(2)/SdKfz.7
 or 3x105mm FH.18(2)/SdKfz.7
 1xArtillery Bttn: @ 1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
 2x150mm Skoda M14/35(2)/
 SdKfz.7
 3xAA Battery: @ 1-2xNimrod 36/40.M SPAA

Hungarian First Armoured Division 1942-1943

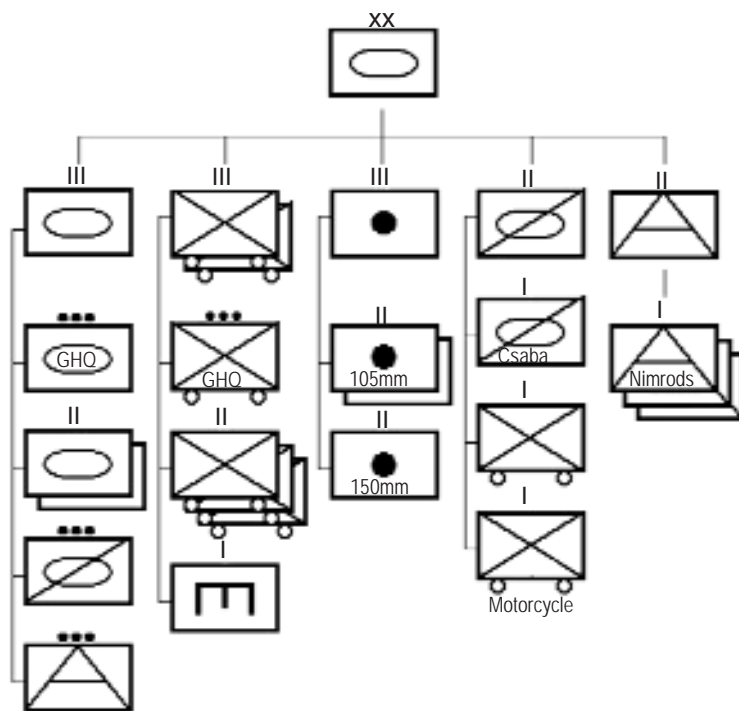


CHART KEY



Notes:

- 1) 37mm PAK.35 ATGs may be replaced by 40mm 41.Ms or 50mm PAK.38s.
- 2) From June through September 1942, Heavy Tank Companies and 50mm PAK.38 ATGs were not available.
- 3) The 105mm 40.M was the Hungarian designation for the Czech 105mm "Skoda" vz.35.

1ST ARMORED DIVISION (1943 - 1945)

Medium Tank Co: 3xTuran-I or 3xPz.IVH
 Heavy Tank Co: 3xTuran-II or 3xPz.VIA "Tiger"
 or 3xStuG.III G
 Infantry Co: 3xInfantry/Truck,
 1xInfantry Support/Truck
 Engineer Co: 3xEngineer/Truck,
 1xInfantry Support/Truck
 Support Co: 1x81mm Mortar(2)/Truck,
 3xMMG/Truck,
 1-2x37mm PAK.36
 or 50mm PAK.38/Truck

Motorcycle Co: 3xMotorcycle Infantry[R],
1xMotorcycle Support[R]

Recon Co: 3xInfantry[R]/Truck,
1xInfantry Support[R]/Truck

Armored Car Co: 3xCsaba 39M Armored Car[R],
1x37mm PAK.36/Truck

Assault Gun Co: 3xZrinyi 43M or 3xMarder IIIM
or 3xHetzer

Tank Bttn: 1xTuran-II(HQ),
2xMedium Tank Co,
2xHeavy Tank Co, 1xToldi-IIA,
1xNimrod

Motorized Bttn: 1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
3xInfantry Co, 1xSupport Co,
1xEngineer Co

Recon Bttn: 1xInfantry (HQ)/Trunk,
1xMotorcycle Co, 1xRecon Co,
1xArmored Car Co

Motorized Rgt: 1xInfantry (GHQ)/Truck,
3xMotorized Bttn,
1xAssault Gun Co

Tank Rgt: 1xTuran II (GHQ), 2xTank Bttn,
1xToldi-IIa[R] or Toldi-IIIM[R],
1xNimrod

Armored Div: 1xTank Rgt, 2xMotorized Rgt,
1xRecon Bttn

Division Assets

2xArtillery Bttn: @1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
3x105mm FH.18(2)/SdKfz.7

1xArtillery Bttn: @1xInfantry (HQ)/Truck,
2x150mm Skoda M14/35/SdKfz.7

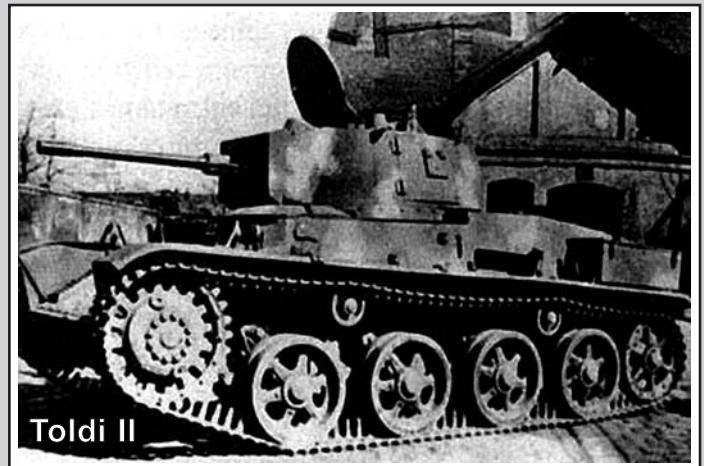
1xAA Battery: @1-2xNimrod

Notes:

- 1) German tanks became available in October 1944.
- 2) Hetzers became available in December 1944.
- 3) Toldi-IIIMs became available in 1944.
- 4) You may never field more than one Pz.VIA "Tiger" Company with this division.
- 5) If you do field a "Tiger" Company, you may add 1xPz.VG "Panther" platoon to it if you wish.
- 6) Panzerfausts became available in 1944.



Nimrod



Toldi II



Csaba

Partial Bibliography

1. "Hungary At War: Civilians and Soldiers in WWII", by Cecil D. Eby, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park PA, 1998
2. "The Dysfunctional Coalition: Axis Power and the Eastern Front", Journal of Military History, 1996
3. "Hungarian 1st Armoured Division: 1943-45", List H6, by Mark Bevis, Micromark Publications