

The Axis Minors

The Other Guys in Operation Barbarossa

By Greg Moore

When Germany attacked Russia in June of 1941, they did not do so alone. This article will give some brief notes on five Axis partners who also participated in the campaign along with a few new supplemental units. They all had different motivations for being involved. They are presented in no particular order of prominence.

Romania

Romania began WWII attempting to remain neutral. However, after being forced by Germany and Russia to cede some of her territories and also after a major political shake-up, she finally decided to join the Axis rather than be gobbled up by it. Romania officially became a member of the Axis in November of 1940. The oil fields at Ploesti were a major resource for Germany and the target of many allied bombing raids later in the war.

For the attack on Russia in 1941, Romania furnished two armies, the 3rd and the 4th, along with some supporting units for a total of about 10 divisions and 6 brigades of infantry, cavalry, and armor. Each army had one single regiment of tanks under its command so this was mostly an infantry and cavalry army though three of the brigades were mountain troops. The tanks which rolled into Russia for them in 1941 were mostly R-2 (the Czech built LT-35) and R-35 (purchased from France).



Romanian heavy machine gun platoon. Represents six HMG's plus crew.



Romanian R-1 Light Tank. Armed with machine gun and very light armor. This is a correction to the previous version without the "Cruz" modifier added to the armor.



Romanian R-2 Tank. This is actually the Czech built LT-35 (Pz 35t in German service). The previously published version had the "Cruz" numbers on it which actually were for the Pz 38t. Cruz had lumped these two types of Czech tank together as one type.




Romanian Renault 35. French built tank. This is the Byron Henderson version of this tank with the armor adjusted down to where it should be (no "Cruz" modifier).


Hungary


Though Hungary had been moving closer and closer to the German sphere of influence for many years, she had remained officially neutral. The promise of reacquiring lost territories had enticed her to participate in the invasion of Yugoslavia but still not as an official ally. When the Hungarian city of Kassa was bombed at the beginning of Barbarossa, supposedly by Russian aircraft, Hungary formally

declared war on Russia and became a member of the Axis alliance on June 27, just five days after the invasion of Russia.

Hungary mobilized 200,000 troops to serve in the invasion and sent all three of her field armies. Their armor regiments were equipped with Toldi I tanks and CV3 Ansaldo tankettes, both entirely unsuited to modern tank warfare.

 Hungarian heavy machine gun platoon. Represents six HMG's plus crew.


 Hungarian Ansaldo 33V tankette. Italian built light tankette. Armed with machine gun and very light armor. Obsolete and nearly useless like all other tankettes of this period.

 Hungarian Toldi I tank. This is a version with the armor adjusted down by Byron Henderson (a correction to his original set). This tank only had a modified anti-tank rifle for a main gun and light armor. Unfortunately, this was the best tank that the Hungarians took to war with them in June of 1941.

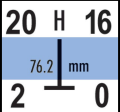
Finland

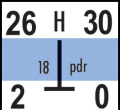
Finland was never an actual member of the Axis powers but was anxious to regain territory lost to the Russians in the Winter War (in fact, they referred to their part in Barbarossa as the Continuation War, as they considered it part of the Winter War). Because of this, Finland allowed Germany to use her as a base for Barbarossa and raised several hundred thousand troops to participate in the invasion, although in the end, the Finns refused to advance beyond the border of their previously lost territory.

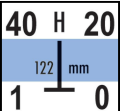
The Finns raised about 15 divisions of infantry. They did not use many tanks and those consisted mostly of obsolete captured Russian tanks along with a few tanks supplied to them by Germany.

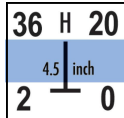
 Finnish bicycle platoon. These were used as recon units by the Finns.

The Finns used a mixture of artillery pieces from several different countries in their infantry divisions.

 Finnish 76.2mm artillery. The Finns captured about 150 of these from the Russians during the Winter War and used them in a number of divisions in the Continuation War.

 Finnish 18 pdr artillery. The Finns bought 30 of these old guns from the British during the Winter War. They arrived too late to see action but served with the 17th Infantry Division during the Continuation War.

 Finnish 122mm artillery. Many of these were captured from the Russians during the Winter War and many more during the Continuation War. The Finns issued them out to their field artillery.



Finnish 4.5 inch artillery. The British donated 24 of these old guns to the Finns during the Winter War and another 30 were purchased from Spain. They were used in the 7th, 11th, and 18th Divisions with 18 also in use as the main gun of the BT-42.

Italy

By June of 1941, Italy had been at war in Europe for a year. Campaigns in North Africa and the recently completed Balkan invasion had left the Italian Army stretched thin and unable to send any troops into Russia in June. By late July however, Italy was able to send 60,000 troops to fight alongside her German ally. The initial Italian Expeditionary Corps consisted of two infantry and one cavalry division along with supporting units. The only tank support provided was a few light tankettes attached to the cavalry.

Slovak Republic

After Germany occupied western Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, the eastern half of the country became the Slovak Republic and functioned as a client state of Germany. An army called the Slovak Army Group was sent into Russia four days after the start of the invasion. The group proved to be unable to keep up with the speed of the German advance due to a lack of motorized transportation. In July the mobile elements of this army were organized into a new group, called the Slovak Mobile Command or more commonly known as Brigade Pílfousek, named after its commander. In August the Slovak Army Group was reorganized into two divisions: the 1st Slovak Mobile Infantry Division, and the 2nd Slovak Security Infantry Division. The 1st Division was also known as the Slovak Fast Division and fought as a front line unit for the rest of the year. The Slovak army which invaded Russia in 1941 was equipped with primarily LT-35 tanks.



Slovak heavy machine gun platoon with PanzerBlitz range.

Supplemental German Unit



German rifle platoon. This is the Panzerblitz version of this early war unit with a longer range for infantry.