



Painting of a Royal Hungarian Air Force (RHAF) Messerschmitt Me 210Ca climbing to meet the enemy. Even though the Luftwaffe rejected the Me 210, the RHAF pilots found it to be a very acceptable weapon in their war against the Russians and Americans.

ESCAPE OF THE MESSERSCHMITTS

FIGHTING A RETREATING ACTION, THE COMBAT AIRCRAFT OF THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN AIR FORCE WOULD ASSEMBLE IN AUSTRIA FOR A LAST STAND
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To most North American citizens, the between-the-wars politics of Central Europe were strange at best — borders and alliances kept changing while most of the names seemed unpronounceable. Obviously, this article focuses on Hungary and, much like Nazi Germany, that nation had many restrictions put upon it by its actions during the Great War. This meant the country was forbidden from having an air force although an air arm did develop under the guise of “flying clubs.” Within this system, a variety of military aircraft began to be acquired — usually from Hungary’s “friends” in Germany and Italy.

On 28 December 1938, the *Magyar Királyi Honvéd Legió* — the Royal Hungarian Air Force — was created. Equipment included 27 Junkers Ju 86K-2 twin-engine bombers, 27 Fiat CR.32 biplane fighters, and nine Heinkel He 70 recon aircraft. Hungarians had taken a

deep-seated dislike to the new Republic of Slovakia. Troops from Slovakia had made incursions into Hungary and on 15 May 1938, Hungarian military forces attacked Slovakia and this caused the Slovaks to retreat and stay inside their own borders.

Next up was the likelihood of war with neighboring Rumania and possibly Yugoslavia. The Rumanians were particularly hated by the Hungarians and some of this was due to centuries-old blood feuds. At this point, it was decided to equip the air force with replacements for the CR.32 biplane and in early 1939 Germany supplied three Messerschmitt Bf 109D-1 and three Heinkel He 112B monoplane fighters for competitive evaluation and possible license production. A contract was also undertaken with Italy that saw the acquisition of 70 Fiat CR.42 biplanes.

Although obsolete in design, the aircraft compared favorably with the fighters flown by Hungary’s neighbors.

Owing to the balance of trade between Hungary and Italy, a decision was made to acquire more Italian aircraft, mainly trainers and recon aircraft, and by the end of 1939, the Hungarians could field a combat force of 69 Fiat CR.32 fighters, 71 CR.42 fighters, 63 Ju 86K bombers, 16 He 70 long-range recon aircraft, 34 He 46 short-range recon aircraft, and 51 WM short-range recon aircraft (designed and built locally).

By 1940, the Hungarian government made the decision to invest funds in building their own aviation industry since it could not rely on foreign deliveries because of the start of WWII. However, it did instruct Hungarian companies to favor obtaining licenses from German companies. The air force