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Josef Fözö

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Josef "Joschko" Fözö (7 November 1912 – 4 March 1979) was a Luftwaffe ace and recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross during World War II. The Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross was awarded to recognise extreme battlefield bravery or successful military leadership.

Early life and career [edit]

Fözö was born on 7 November 1912 in Vienna, the capital of Austria-Hungary.[1] He joined the Austrian Luftstreitkräfte before transferring to the Luftwaffe in 1938. From the summer of 1938 until March 1939, Fözö was then 3. Staffel (3rd squadron) of *Jagdgruppe 88* during the Spanish Civil War in support of Nationalist forces, claiming three aerial victories.[2] During his service in Spain, 3. Staffel was first commanded by Oberleutnant Werner Mölders, and then by Oberleutnant Hubertus von Bonin.[3] Fözö, who flew 147 combat missions in Spain, was awarded the Spanish Cross in Gold with Swords(*Spanienkreuz in Gold mit Schwertern*).[4]

On 24 June 1939, the *Oberkommando der Luftwaffe* (Luftwaffe High Command) ordered the formation *Jagdgeschwader 71* (JG 71—1st Fighter Wing). On 15 July, two *Staffeln* were created at Schleißheim Airfield from elements of I. *Gruppe* of *Jagdgeschwader 51* (JG 51—51st Fighter Wing). Fözö was appointed *Staffelkapitän* (squadron leader) of 2. *Staffel* which was equipped with the Messerschmitt Bf 109 D-1. In preparation for war on 26 August, JG 71 was ordered to Fürstenfeldbruck Airfield to provide protection for the city of Munich and then to Böblingen Airfield on 29 August.[5]

World War II [edit]

World War II in Europe began on Friday 1 September 1939 when German forces invaded Poland. On 3 October, the creation of II. *Gruppe* (2nd group) of *Jagdgeschwader 51* (JG 51—51st Fighter Wing) from JG 71 was ordered. Formation began on 16 October and was completed on 1 November at Fürstenfeldbruck Airfield. In consequence, Fözö's 2. *Staffel* of JG 71 became the 4. *Staffel* of JG 51.[6]

Fözö claimed his first aerial victory on 16 April 1940 when he shot down a tethered balloon during the "Phoney War" period preceding the Battle of France. On 8 July 1940, he claimed the Supermarine Spitfire of Squadron Leader Desmond Cooke shot down. Cooke was the commanding officer of Royal Air Force (RAF) No. 65 Squadron who was killed in action that day.[7] On 13 July during the *Kanalkampf* phase of the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe attacked convoy CW 5 which had left the Port of Dover. On this mission, Fözö claimed a Hurricane, Unteroffizier Ernst Bucher engaged a formation of B Flight of No. 56 Squadron led by Flight Lieutenant John Coghlan. In this encounter, Fözö was credited with two Hawker Hurricane fighters shot down.[8] On 31 July a Spitfire of No. 74 Squadron flown by Pilot Officer Harold Gunn, who was killed. Three kills were claimed on 16 August, a Hurricane of No. 501 Squadron (F/L Stoney Killed) on 18 August.

On 24 August, Fözö may have damaged and claimed shot down Pilot Officer James Lockhart from No. 65 Squadron northwest of Dover. Lockhart managed to crash land his Hurricane at Hawkinge and was hospitalized.[9]

Another Spitfire was claimed on 26 August for No. 616 Squadron; F/O Moberly killed).

On 20 February 1941, Fözö was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* (group commander) of II. *Gruppe* of JG 51. He replaced *Hauptmann* Günther Matthes who was transferred. Command of 4. *Staffel* was passed on to Oberleutnant Erich Hohagen.[10]

By the time Hauptmann Fözö flew in the invasion of Russia, he had 15 victories to his credit, and was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 2 July for 22 victories, including four bombers downed on 30 June alone. On 11 July 1941, Fözö was badly injured in a take-off accident at Stary Bykhaw in Bf 109 F-2 (Werknummer 12836—factory number 8086) in consequence, command of II. *Gruppe* was temporarily passed on to *Hauptmann* Hubertus von Bonin.[11] Following his convalescence, Fözö was promoted Major of I. *Gruppe* of JG 51, replacing *Hauptmann* Wilhelm Hachfeld who was transferred. The group was based at Rjabtsi airfield, located 26 kilometers (16 miles) north of Dno and 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) west-southwest of Sutoy on the northern bank of the Shelon.[12] On 24 May, the *Gruppe* moved to an airfield at Tuletyky, located southwest of Lake Ilmen between Staraya Russa and Dno. Here on 31 May, Fözö was severely injured in a landing accident when his Bf 109 F-2 (factory number 8086) flipped over during the nose up landing stop. In consequence, Fözö had to be replaced by *Hauptmann* Heinrich Krafft as commander of *Gruppe*.[13]

On recovery Fözö was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* of I. *Gruppe* of *Jagdgeschwader* 108, a training unit, in June 1944. He led the unit until 29 January 1945.

Later life [edit]

Fözö committed suicide on 4 March 1979 at the age of 66 in Vienna, Austria.[4]

Summary of career [edit]

Aerial victory claims [edit]

According to Obermaier, Fözö was credited with 27 aerial victories, three of which during the Spanish Civil War and 15 over the Western Front and nine on the Eastern Front. He flew 537 combat missions, including 147 in Spain.[14] Mathews and Foreman, authors of *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims*, researched the German Federal Archives and found documentation for 23 aerial victory claims, plus three further unconfirmed claims. This number includes three claims during the Spanish Civil War, 11 on the Western Front, and nine on the Eastern Front.[15]

Chronicle of aerial victories [hide]

This and the ? (question mark) indicates information discrepancies listed by Prien, Stemmer, Rodeike, Bock, Forsyth, Mathews and Foreman.

Claim	Date	Time	Type	Location	Claim	Date	Time	Type	Location
Spanish Civil War									
– 3. *Staffel* of *Jagdgruppe 88* –[16]									
Spanish Civil War — September 1938 – January 1939									
1	18 September 1938	—	I-16		3	17 January 1939	—	I-16	
2	31 October 1938	—	I-16						
World War II									
– 4. *Staffel* of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 –[16]									
"Phoney War" — 1 November 1939 – 9 May 1940									
17[Note 1]	16 April 1940	15:55	tethered balloon	west of Bresach[17]					
– 4. *Staffel* of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 –[16]									
At the Channel and over England — 26 June 1940 – 28 February 1941									
2	8 July 1940	16:45	Spitfire	north of Dover[18]	9[Note 2]	16 August 1940	—	Hurricane	east of Dover[19]
3	13 July 1940	19:20	Hurricane	10 km (6.2 mi) west of Cap Gris Nez[20]	10	16 August 1940	18:05	Spitfire	east of Dover[19]
4	13 July 1940	19:30	Hurricane	10 km (6.2 mi) west of Cap Gris Nez[20]	11[Note 2]	18 August 1940	—	Hurricane	east of Ramsgate[19]
5	31 July 1940	16:55	Spitfire	northwest of Dover[20]	12	24 August 1940	09:35	Hurricane	northwest of Dover[19]
6	8 August 1940	12:35	Spitfire	southeast of Folkestone[20]	13	26 August 1940	13:15	Spitfire	Canterbury[19]
7	15 August 1940	16:17	Hurricane	east of Burnham-on-Crouch[19]	14	15 October 1940	09:32	Hurricane	London[19]
8[Note 2]	16 August 1940	—	Hurricane	east of Dover[19]					
– Stab II. *Gruppe* of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 –[16]									
At the Channel and over England — 20 February – 7 June 1941									
15	9 April 1941	12:00	Spitfire	3 km (1.9 mi) north of Mardyck[21]					
– Stab II. *Gruppe* of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 –[16]									
Operation Barbarossa — 22 June – 11 July 1941									
16	29 June 1941	19:25	I-16[22]		21	1 July 1941	14:30	I-16[23]	
17	30 June 1941	10:35	R-10 (Seversky)[22]		22	2 July 1941	14:32	SB-2[23]	
18	30 June 1941	12:40	DB-3[22]		23	9 July 1941	15:15	I-16	airfield Subowa[23]
19	30 June 1941	16:45	DB-3[22]		24	11 July 1941	17:05	DB-3[24]	
20	30 June 1941	17:30	TB-7[22]						

Awards [edit]

- Spanish Cross in Gold with Swords (14 April 1939)[16]
- Iron Cross (1939) 2nd and 1st Class[16]
- Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 2 July 1941 as *Hauptmann* and *Gruppenkommandeur* of the II./*Jagdgeschwader* 51[25][26]

Publications [edit]

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Notes [edit]

1. ^ This claim is not listed by Mathews and Foreman.[16]
2. ^ ^ ^ According to Mathews and Foreman, this claim is unconfirmed.[16]

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1. ^ Obermaier 1989, p. 11.
2. ^ Forsyth 2011, pp. 78, 83.
3. ^ Lauritsen 2010, p. 108.
4. ^ ^ ^ ^ Dixon 2023, p. 71.
5. ^ Prien et al. 2000, p. 258.
6. ^ Prien et al. 2001, p. 285.
7. ^ Sarkar 2020, p. 33.
8. ^ Bergström 2015, pp. 77–78.
9. ^ Sarkar 2024, "Saturday, 24 August 1940".
10. ^ Prien et al. 2002, p. 56.
11. ^ Prien et al. 2003, pp. 277, 288.
12. ^ Prien et al. 2006, pp. 252, 265.
13. ^ Prien et al. 2006, pp. 252–253, 265, 274.
14. ^ Obermaier 1989, p. 111.
15. ^ Mathews & Foreman 2014, pp. 326–327.
16. ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Mathews & Foreman 2014, p. 326.
17. ^ Prien et al. 2001, p. 291.
18. ^ Prien et al. 2002, p. 61.
19. ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Prien et al. 2002, p. 65.
20. ^ ^ ^ ^ Prien et al. 2002, p. 62.
21. ^ Prien et al. 2002, p. 66.
22. ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Prien et al. 2003, p. 280.
23. ^ ^ ^ Prien et al. 2003, p. 281.
24. ^ Prien et al. 2003, p. 282.
25. ^ Fellgiebel 2000, p. 183.
26. ^ Scherzer 2007, p. 314.

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Military offices		
Preceded by *Hauptmann* Günther Matthes	**Commander of II. *Jagdgeschwader* 51** 21 February 1941 – September 1941	Succeded by *Hauptmann* Hartmann Grasser
Preceded by *Hauptmann* Wilhelm Hachfeld	**Commander of I. *Jagdgeschwader* 51** 3 May 1942 – 1 June 1942	Succeded by *Hauptmann* Heinrich Krafft

Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross recipients of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 "Mölders" [show]

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