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Kurt Sochatzy

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Kurt Sochatzy (5 February 1915 – 2 May 1996) 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 - for the fighter pilots, it was a quantifiable measure of skill and success. On 3 August 1941 Kurt Sochatzy was shotdown in his Bf 109 and was captured by Soviet troops. He was held as a prisoner of war until 1947. During his career he was credited with 38 aerial victories.

Kurt Sochatzy	
Born	5 February 1915 Schloß Pragerhof, Austria-Hungary
Died	2 May 1996 (aged 81) Vienna, Austria
Allegiance	First Austrian Republic (to 1938) Nazi Germany (to 1945) Second Austrian Republic
Branch	Austrian Air Force (1935–38) Luftwaffe (1938–45) Austrian Air Force (1956–76)
Years of service	1935–1940 1956–1976
Rank	*Oberleutnant* (Wehrmacht) *Oberst* (Bundesheer)
Unit	Condor Legion JG 3
Battles / wars	Spanish Civil War World War II • Eastern Front
Awards	Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross

Military career

Austrian by birth, Sochatzy joined the *Luftstreitkräfte* (Austrian Air Force) in 1935. After the German *Anschluss* of 1938, his unit was incorporated into the new *Luftwaffe* as I./JG 138 (renamed I./JG 134 in November 1938).[1] From February to June 1939, he was in Spain as part of the Condor Legion, serving with 3./Jagdgruppe 88, and was awarded the *Spanienkreuz in Bronze mit Schwerten*. Upon his return, as a *Leutnant*, he was assigned to I./JG 76 and participated in the Polish campaign at the start of the war.

Promoted to *Oberleutnant* in October, he was then transferred in January 1940 as Adjutant to the training unit *Jagdfliegerschule 5*. He also served as Staffelkapitän of 3./JFS 5 where, among others, he trained future aces Hans-Joachim Marseille, Walter Nowotny and Hans Strelow. He returned to the frontline after the Battle of Britain, on 15 December 1940, taking over command of 7./JG 3. He claimed his first victory in the unit's last days on the Western Front - shooting down an No. 603 Sqn Spitfire over the English Channel on 7 June 1941.[2][3] Four days later, III./JG 3 transferred to southern Poland for the invasion of Russia (Operation Barbarossa).

On 26 June he claimed his second victory, a Russian SB-2 bomber and four days later he shot down 3 more bombers to take his score to six. The Russian pilots suffered from poor training, obsolete tactics and desperate missions, and as the *Wehrmacht* raced across the Ukraine, Sochatzy's unit was constantly on the move to keep up with the advance. In fact, Sochatzy was one of the fastest scorers in the first month of the invasion - scoring an incredible 35 victories to the end of July, and second on to the 44 of Walter Oesau. Included in this total were five victories on both 9 July (13-17v.) and 23 July (27-31v.)

But he did not have it all his own way. On 16 July, return fire from two SB-3 bombers (his 25th and 26th victories) forced an emergency landing behind enemy lines. Despite being initially reported MIA, he eventually made it back to his unit. His luck ran out on 3 August flying his Bf 109 F-2 (*Werknummer* 8217), when he was shot down engaging an Il-2 ground-attack bomber, possibly after colliding with an I-16 over Kiev.[4] Bailing out he again landed behind enemy lines for a third time, but this time was captured and became a POW for the rest of the war.

In recognition of these achievements, he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (*Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes*) on 12 August 1941. He was finally released, and repatriated to Austria in 1949 [5][3]

Later life

Following World War II, Sochatzy rejoined the Austrian Air Force and served in it until 1976, retiring with the rank of *Oberst* ('Colonel'). He died died on 2 May 1996 at the age of 81 in Vienna, Austria.[6]

Summary of career

According to Obermaier, Sochatzy was credited with 38 aerial victories claimed in 180 missions. He also destroyed 2 trains and 27 aircraft on the ground in strafing attacks.[7]

Awards

- Spanienkreuz in Bronze mit Schwerten
- Flugzeugführerabzeichen
- Front Flying Clasp of the Luftwaffe
- Iron Cross (1939) 2nd and 1st Class[8]
- Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 12 August 1941 as *Oberleutnant* and *Staffelkapitän* in the 7./*Jagdgeschwader* 3[9][10]

References

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2. ^ Luftwaffe 39–45 Historia website.
3. ^ [a] [b] Weal 2001, p. 8.
4. ^ Spick 2006, p. 121.
5. ^ Luftwaffe 39–45 Historia website.
6. ^ Dixon 2023, p. 112.
7. ^ Obermaier 1989, p. 207.
8. ^ Dixon 2023, p. 111.
9. ^ Fellgiebel 2000, p. 402.
10. ^ Scherzer 2007, p. 709.

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Military offices		
Preceded by ***Oblt* Erwin Neuerburg**	**Squadron Leader of 7./JG 3** 15 December 1940 – 3 August 1941	**Unknown**

v · t · e Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross recipients of *Jagdgeschwader* 3 "Udet" [show]

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