

Hungarian Rhapsody Personalities

Compiled by Chip Saltsman

The battles in Hungary during late 1944 and early 1945 featured an interesting cast of characters, some for their infamy and some for the mark they would make on the world stage in the years after the war.

Leonid Brezhnev (December 19, 1906 - November 10, 1982) – Major General Leonid Brezhnev (center figure in the photo), is the future leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982. Helped in his rise by political patron Nikita Khrushchev, Brezhnev was the Political Officer of the 18th Army in the Caucasus, particularly supporting their landings at Novorossiysk (about which he wrote a book named “The Little Land”). During the Hungarian Rhapsody Campaign, Brezhnev was the Chief of the Political Directorate of the 4th Ukrainian Front (the white frame units in the northern part of the map).



Oskar Dirlewanger (26 September 1895 – 7 June 1945) was arguably the vilest man in the Nazi SS. Dirlewanger served in France during World War I, was wounded 6 times, and apparently emerged shattered by the frenzied violence and barbarism of years in the trenches. This, combined with an amoral personality, alcoholism, and sadistic sexual orientation, determined his path to “terror warfare” in the Second World War. He was a member of the Freikorps and active with the SA between the wars, embezzling money from his employers which he funneled to the SA. He fought in the Spanish Civil War as a member of the Condor Legion, and was wounded three more times. At the start of World War 2, he joined the Waffen SS with the rank of Obersturmführer (first lieutenant), and eventually became the commander of the so-called Dirlewanger Brigade. This group was active during the German occupation of Poland to deal with resistance fighters and Belarus “with a specialty of 'pacifying' an area by slaughtering every man, woman and child.” The list of atrocities committed by

Dirlewanger and his band of criminals is appalling, and it is estimated they murdered well over 50,000 civilians in brutal fashion. They were used in the front lines during the Soviet advance in the summer of 1944 and suffered heavy losses. Reconstituted, the Brigade was used to help put down the Warsaw Uprising, reportedly killing 40,000 civilians in 2 days. They were then sent to help suppress the Slovakian Uprising, and subsequently put into the front lines against the

Russians, which is how they wound up as a counter in Hungarian Rhapsody. Dirlewanger was wounded in February 1945. Despite going into hiding, he was discovered and arrested 1 June 1945—reportedly recognized by a former concentration camp inmate—and imprisoned. He died several days later, apparently beaten to death by retribution-seeking Poles who were guards at the prison.



Ion Dumitrache (25 August 1889 - 6 March 1977) is a revered soldier from Rumania. He was the commander of the Rumanian 2nd Mountain Division for much of Operation Barbarossa. He was wounded twice in World War I. His division was part of the Rumanian forces fighting on the Axis side, and he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. Field Marshal von Kleist noted “the heroic actions of the 2nd Mountain Division during the retreat from Vladicaucasus”. Later the division stubbornly held the defense lines at Sebastopol until finally withdrawn by sea, earning the title “Flint Division.” In August 1944, Romania surrendered, and its forces quickly began fighting the Hungarian and German armies, capturing the area around Sibiu and Turda on the Hungarian Rhapsody map, setting the stage for the invasion of Hungary. Dumitrache was placed in command of the Rumanian Mountain Corps during the period portrayed in Hungarian Rhapsody and participated in the Soviet offensives through the end of the war. He was imprisoned by the Soviets after VE Day, but was later released.

Maximilian Fretter-Pico (6 February 1892 – 4 April 1984) commanded 6 Armee during the Hungarian Rhapsody campaign. Fretter-Pico followed a path similar to many German senior officers: a decorated World War I junior officer who stayed with the military between the wars. He was the German Military Attaché to Turkey in 1938. At the start of Operation Barbarossa, he commanded the 97th Jaeger Division in Army Group South. He was promoted to lead XXX Corps at the end of 1941, and participated in the Battle of Sevastopol. In mid-1944 he was given command of 6 Armee until the end of the year. After being relieved for failure to halt the Soviet advance, he was placed in command of IX Corps, an under-strength reserve unit. He surrendered to the Americans and was interned until 1947.





Johannes Friessner (22 March 1892 – 26 June 1971) was the Army Group South commander during the first portion of Hungarian Rhapsody. Friessner saw extensive duty during World War I and served in the Reichswehr between the wars. During World War II he commanded the 102nd Infantry Division, then XXIII Corps during all of 1943. He commanded Army Detachment “Narva” during early 1944, and took command of Army Group South in July 1944. Unable to halt the fall and winter offensives in Hungary, he was relieved of his command on 22 December 1944 and did not serve actively afterwards. Friessner was the Chairman of the *Verband deutscher Soldaten* (Union of German Soldiers) in 1951, and was active in advising in the redevelopment of the Bundeswehr. His published memoir is titled *Verratene Schlachten* (Betrayed Battles), in which he blames much of the Axis failures on the Hungarian effort, an example of the German arrogance that frustrated their allies.

Herbert Otto Gille (8 March 1897 – 26 December 1966) Gille was a recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds, making him the most highly decorated Waffen-SS member of the war. He served in World War I and won the Iron Cross First and Second Classes. Gille joined the Nazi Party and the SS in 1931 and in 1934 he joined the SS combat support forces. As the commander of a battalion in an SS-V regiment, Gille participated in the invasion of Poland and in the western campaign. In 1940 he was appointed a regimental commander in the SS Division Wiking, led by Felix Steiner. With his regiment, Gille participated in the Operation Barbarossa in 1941 and in the advance to Kuban in 1942; he received the Knight's Cross on 8 October 1942. He then took command of the Wiking Division on the Eastern Front. Early in 1944, Gille participated in the breakout of the Group Stemmermann from the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket. In January 1945 Gille, as leader of the IV SS Panzer Corps, led the failed attempt to relieve the encircled German and Hungarian troops in the Battle of Budapest. He surrendered to the U.S forces in Austria. After the war, Gille became active in HIAG, a lobby group and a revisionist veteran's organization founded by former high-ranking Waffen-SS personnel in West Germany in 1951. Gille died in 1966.



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Foto: Stzheld | 1944 Frühling



Sergey Ilyich Gorshkov (1902-1993) was born a Don Cossack in the Volgograd Region. He joined the Red Army in 1920, and participated in the Civil War. By April 1941 he was commander of the 206th Rifle Division and participated in the early border battles and the defense of Kiev. In November 1941 he was assigned as commander of 15th Cossack Cavalry Division in the North Caucasian Military District (in July 1942, this division was included in the North Caucasian Front). He participated in Battle for Caucasus, after which his division was renamed the Red Banner 11th Guards Cossack Cavalry Division). In May of 1943 Gorshkov became Deputy Commander of the 5th Guards Don Cossack Cavalry Corps of the South Front. In December 1943 he became the Deputy Commander of the 4th Guards Kuban Cossack Cavalry Corps and was seriously wounded during the advance on Odessa. In May of 1944, Gorshkov became Commander of the 5th Guards Don Cossack Cavalry Corps. On the 20th of

August 1944, the Corps was included in CMG under Gorshkov's command. After the war, he graduated Highest Military Academy in 1946, but retired in November due to illness. He lived in Rostov-on-Don until his death in 1993.

Gotthard Heinrici (25 December 1886 – 10 December 1971) came from a family of soldiers reaching back to the 12th Century. He was a World War I veteran, who fought on both the Eastern and Western fronts as a junior officer. He commanded the XII Corps during the Battle for France in World War II, and succeeded in breaking through the Maginot Line. He commanded the 4th Army during the first two years of Barbarossa, honing his defensive skills during the winter battles in front of Moscow. In the summer of 1944, he was placed in command of the First Panzer Army and First Hungarian Army and skillfully managed to retreat into Slovakia in the face of determined Soviet attacks. Heinrici was appointed to command Army Group Vistula, facing 1.5 million Soviet soldiers advancing on Berlin in the final months of the war. Dismissed during the chaos of the fall of Berlin, he surrendered to the British forces and spent three years in captivity. Heinrici was featured prominently in Cornelius Ryan's book *The Last Battle*. Married to a half-Jewish (Mischling) himself, Heinrici supported many Nazi policies including the Lebensraum concept.



As a military commander, historians described him as the premiere defensive expert of the Wehrmacht and a genius admired by his peers, although little-known today because he was, in the words of one historian, "as charismatic as a 20-pound sack of fertilizer". However, he was revered by his officers and men who nicknamed him Unswer Giftzweg (literally "our poison dwarf" but meaning "our tough little bastard") in recognition of his character and lack of physical stature.



Iván vitéz Hindy de Kishind (28 June 1890 – 29 August 1946) was an officer in the Royal Hungarian Army during World War II, commanding the Hungarian I Corps from 16 October 1944 to 12 February 1945. Hindy also commanded the Hungarian defenders of Budapest during the Siege of Budapest. On 11 February 1945, Hindy was captured by the Soviets trying to escape just prior to the fall of the city on 13 February. Hindy was sentenced to death after the war as a collaborator with Nazi Germany and was executed in 1946.

Miklós Horthy (18 June 1868 – 9 Feb 1957) was the Regent of Hungary until 15 October 1944. He began his career in the Navy, rising to Admiral during World War I. He emerged as the Regent of Hungary in 1920, after a chaotic period following the end of the Great War. Hungary had lost much territory in the Treaty of Trianon. Horthy regarded his country as being caught between two superpowers, and while he was concerned by Nazi Germany he was absolutely obsessed with the threat of Soviet Communism. A reluctant German ally, Hungary was gradually drawn into the war. After the loss of the entire Second Hungarian Army during the Stalingrad disaster and as the Red Army loomed ever closer, Horthy sent out peace feelers to the Allies. The Germans responded by occupying Hungary and keeping Horthy on as a virtual figurehead. There is quite a historical debate as to Horthy's involvement in deportations of Hungarian Jews, what he knew about it and what he could realistically have done to halt it. Horthy contacted the Soviets in the middle of October 1944, in the middle of the Debrecen battle, and offered to surrender while retaining the Hungarian government's autonomy. On 15 October 1944, Horthy told his government ministers



that Hungary had signed an armistice with the Soviet Union. He said, "It is clear today that Germany has lost the war... Hungary has accordingly concluded a preliminary armistice with Russia, and will cease all hostilities against her." (This is the "Horthy Speech" Optional Rule.) German reaction was swift, initiating "Operation Panzerfaust" led by Otto Skorzeny, which was a coup to place the fascist Arrow Cross party in power. The Germans kidnapped Horthy's son, Miklos, Jr. and threatened to kill him unless Horthy abdicated in favor of Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi. Horthy abdicated and under duress signed a document giving 'legal sanction' to an Arrow Cross coup. To quote Horthy's memoirs "a signature wrung from a man at machine-gun point can have little legality." Horthy was taken to a castle in Bavaria as captive for the rest of the war. Afterwards, return to Communist Hungary was impossible and Horthy lived out his days in exile in Portugal. His will specified that his body not be returned to Hungary until "after the last Russian soldier has left", and indeed it was not returned until 1993.



Kurt Knispel (20 Sept 1921 – 28 April 1945) is arguably the world's greatest tank ace. With 168 confirmed and 195 unconfirmed kills in World War II, he is considered the tank's equivalent of the Red Baron. In 1940, Knispel applied to join the German army's armored branch after completing an apprenticeship at an automobile factory. At the age of 20 in 1941, he was sent into battle. He fought in nearly every type of German tank, working as a loader, gunner, or commander. He is credited with destroying a T-34 tank from 3,000 meters. He received the Iron Cross, First Class, after taking out his 50th enemy tank. He was awarded the Tank Assault Badge for his 100th tank battle. After his 126th confirmed kill, he was awarded the German Cross in Gold. While commanding a Tiger I tank and then a Tiger II, he destroyed 42 more enemy tanks. Knispel fought in the Budapest campaign, commanding a Tiger II (I-503 Battalion)—he reported 24 hits on his tank

during one battle alone. Knispel was fatally wounded during the final battles in Southern Czechoslovakia after Budapest and Vienna had fallen, getting hit in Wostitz on April 28, 1945.

Knispel was the only non-commissioned officer ever named in a Wehrmacht communique. His slow promotion is credited to conflicts he had with superior officers. He once attacked an officer he saw mistreating Soviet prisoners of war. He also wore longer than approved hair, had facial hair and a tattoo, which came in handy when identifying his body, according to museum spokesman Eva Pankova. He had come full circle, as he had been born in the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, which is where his body was found. Historians at the Moravian Museum in Vrbovec, Czech Republic, located his remains in an unmarked grave in a cemetery for German soldiers in Znojensko.

Note that during World War II the concept of "Panzer aces" received little attention. To the extent that the concept existed, it was mainly advanced by the Waffen-SS as part of its

contributions to Nazi Germany's propaganda campaigns. In most German Army (Heer) units, tank crews and commanders generally received awards for mission performance rather than tank kills. None of the Allied armies paid much attention to the concept. The term "Panzer ace" has become prominent in contemporary popular culture, especially in the United States or as part of the uncritical portrayal of the Waffen-SS in English-language militaria and popular history works. (photo: <http://worldwartwo.filmspector.com/2014/07/kurt-knispel-portrait-of-warrior.html>)



Colonel General **Vitéz Dezső László** (23 July 1894 – 8 June) was a Hungarian Colonel General during World War I and World War II. Commander of the First Hungarian Army from the time of the Battle of Debrecen through the end of the war. He was executed by the People's Republic of Hungary in 1949.

Dmitry Loza (14 April 1922 – 22 May 2001) was a Ukrainian Red Army Colonel and Hero of the Soviet Union. He served as an Armor officer during World War II, fighting in the Vienna Offensive and in the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation. Loza was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union for his leadership of a tank battalion in the Vienna Offensive. Postwar, he was a senior lecturer at the Frunze Military Academy before retiring from the Soviet Army in 1967.

Dmitry Loza was born on 14 April 1922 in the village of Kolesnikovka in Kupyansk Uyezd of the Kharkov Governorate to a peasant family. He received secondary education. In 1940, he was drafted into the Red Army.

Loza graduated from the Saratov Tank School in 1942. From August 1943, he fought in combat and was wounded. He was awarded the Order of the Patriotic



War 2nd class on 13 September. After leaving the hospital in November, he was appointed chief of armaments of the 233rd Tank Brigade's 1st Battalion. In late January 1944, he fought in the Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi Offensive. Loza received the Order of the Red Star on 22 April 1944. He was awarded the Order of Alexander Nevsky on 23 February 1945. By 1945, he was a captain commanding the 1st Tank Battalion of the 46th Guards Tank Brigade, equipped with the M4 Sherman. His tank battalion was reported to have captured trains loaded with ammunition, two warehouses and an artillery workshop with 14 guns, as well as 4 Panther tanks on railway platforms on 23 March on the way to Veszprém. On the same day, the battalion fought an action against a German tank column, reportedly knocking out 29 tanks and self-propelled guns, capturing 20 and destroying 10 vehicles. It also reportedly killed 250 German soldiers. After advancing 100 kilometers, the battalion broke through to Vienna on 9 April, holding there for a day before the arrival of the rest of the brigade. After the end of the war against Germany, the brigade was transferred to the Transbaikal Front. In August 1945, Loza fought in the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. On 30 September 1945, he received the Order of the Red Banner. He was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union and the Order of Lenin on 15 May 1946 for his actions during the Vienna Offensive. In 1950, Loza graduated from the Frunze Military Academy. He graduated from its postgraduate academy in 1956 and became a senior lecturer there. On 30 September 1956, Loza was awarded his second Order of the Red Star. After his retirement in 1967, he worked as a senior fellow at the Research Institute and was an associate professor. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitry_Loza). (There is a lengthy interview with Loza here: <https://iremember.ru/en/memoirs/tankers/dmitriy-loza/>, and a book Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks).

Rodion Malinovsky (23 November 1898 – 31 March 1967) was Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front and most of the Soviet forces present in the game. Malinovsky was turned out of his house by a stepfather at age 13 and survived by working as a farmhand. Despite being underage, he enlisted in the Russian Army during World War I and was promoted for courage under fire. He was part of the Western Front Russian Expeditionary Force and fought in the west, even earning the Croix de Guerre from the French government. Malinovsky fought in the Russian Civil War and in the Spanish Civil War (as a volunteer on the Republican side). During the early part of Operation Barbarossa, Malinovsky distinguished himself as one of the few competent Soviet generals. His command of the Second Guards Army against Hoth near Kotelnikovo during the battle of Stalingrad was the first time the Wehrmacht lost a large-scale clash of armor. Malinovsky was a key figure in the battles against Army Group South all the way into Hungary. Following the Battle of Budapest, his forces liberated Vienna and Brno. He took part in the Soviet invasion of Manchuria at the end of World War II. Following the war, Malinovsky continued to rise, eventually becoming Minister of Defense from 1957 until his death in 1967. He commented



about his career: "Service is service, wherever it occurred. The defense of the fatherland is no small thing."



Günther Pape (14 July 1907 - 21 January 1986) was the commander of PanzerKorps Feldherrnhalle during the early part of the Hungarian Rhapsody campaign, and later KG Pape. After the war, Pape joined the Bundeswehr and eventually was the commander of the 5th Panzer Division in the early 1960's. He resigned in 1966 during the "Generalkrise" (Crisis of the generals) in August 1966. Among other issues, this was centered about the inner leadership of the Bundeswehr and the hierarchy of command between the Federal Ministry of Defense and the armed forces. The "Feldherrnhalle" (Field Marshal's Hall) was the site of the brief battle that ended the Nazi "Beer Hall Putsch" in 1923, which the Nazis later turned into a memorial and political symbol.

Karl Pfeffer-Wildenbruch (June 12, 1888 - January 29, 1971), joined the army in 1907 and served in World War I. He joined the German General Staff, and served as a military attaché to the German military mission in Constantinople and as a staff officer with the 11th Infantry Division. At the end of the war he remained on the General staff of the ZBV 55 and XXIV reserve corps. In August 1919 Pfeffer-Wildenbruch joined the police service, and spent time in the Reich Ministry of the Interior. He became the police commander in Osnabrück and Magdeburg. In 1928 he went to Santiago de Chile, to serve as Chief of the Chilean Carabineros de Chile.

In June 1933, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch became an Oberstleutnant in the National Police Regiment at Frankfurt an der Oder and from May 1936 he was the Inspector General of Police schools, being promoted to [Generalmajor](#) der Polizei in May 1937. In March 1939 Pfeffer-Wildenbruch joined the SS (No. 292 713) and served on the staff of the Reichsführer-SS. At the



end of 1939, following the invasion of Poland, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch was given command of the 4th SS Polizei Division with the rank of SS-Gruppenführer. After the Battle of France, he returned to the staff of the Reichsführer-SS, serving as chief of the colonial police from 1941 to 1943.

In October 1943 he took over as commander of the VI SS Corps, with a promotion to SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS und Polizei. In December 1944 Pfeffer-Wildenbruch was appointed commander of the IX SS Mountain Corps, stationed in Budapest, Hungary. He was in command of the German forces during the Battle of Budapest from 24 December 1944 to 11 February 1945. During the attempt to break out from Budapest, he was seriously wounded, and was taken prisoner by the Soviet forces. On 10 August 1949 he was sentenced to 25 years in prison. In 1955, he was released together with some 10,000 other prisoners of war and war criminals due to an informal agreement concluded in September 1955 between German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin. Pfeffer-Wildenbruch was killed in a traffic accident on 29 January 1971 at Bielefeld.



Issa Alexandrovich Pliyev (25 November 1903 – 2 February 1979) was the commander of Group Pliyev. He was born in the Caucasus region (what is now North Ossetia) and spend his military career in the cavalry. The military historian David Glantz described Pliyev as a “great practitioner of cavalry operations in adverse terrain”. At the start of the invasion of the Soviet Union, Pliyev commanded the 50th Cavalry Division (renamed 3rd Guards Cavalry Division). His unit participated in the Battle of Moscow and the Battle of Stalingrad. Pliyev commanded a cavalry-mechanized group consisting of 4th Guards Cavalry Corps and 4th Mechanized Corps during the Bereznegovataia-Snigirevka Operation along the Black Sea coast, as part of the 3rd Ukrainian Front under Army General Rodion Malinovsky. In the fall of 1944, he commanded a cavalry-mechanized group consisting of two corps during the Battle of Debrecen. He ended the war in command of the Soviet-Mongolian Cavalry-Mechanized Group of the Transbaikal front in Manchuria, fighting against the Japanese Kwantung Army. Pliyev reappeared on the historical stage during the Cuban Missile Crisis, as the commander of Soviet

forces secretly deployed to Cuba as part of Operation Anadyr.



Richard Freiherr von Rosen (28 June 1922 – 26 Oct 2015) joined the Wehrmacht as a soldier in 1940. He was assigned to the Panzer arm and took part in the battles of Smolensk (as part of 4th Panzer Division), Kursk, Normandy (Operation Goodwood) and Budapest. He was severely wounded several times. Upon receiving his commission, Rosen was assigned to one of the first Tiger units for Operation Zitadelle, and then Heavy Panzer Abt 503 with King Tiger tanks during Normandy and Budapest. His recently published book [Panzer Ace](#)

is one of the few books by tank platoon commanders from the war, and it contains a large number of photographs. His account of the fighting around Budapest particularly notes the increased skill of Soviet anti-tank defenses and the frequency with which his heavy tanks were mired and unable to move. Rosen joined the Bundeswehr after the war, eventually commanding Panzer Brigade 21 (1972-1976) and then serving as Defense Attaché at the German Embassy in Paris. He retired in 1982 the rank of major general. (Photo is of Rosen in Tiger 300 leading a parade staged as propaganda footage for the Wochenschau newsreel just prior to rail transport to Budapest—his comment is, “We would have preferred an off-duty Sunday instead.”

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/304555993543999039/?lp=true>. The propaganda footage can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuOCyePOBvU>).

Hans-Ulrich Rudel (2 July 1916 – 18 December 1982) was the most decorated German serviceman of World War II. He is best known for flying a Stuka armed with twin 37mm anti-tank cannons mounted under the wings and inventing the anti-tank aircraft. He is credited with the destruction of 519 tanks, as well as several ships, including heavily damaging the Soviet battleship Marat. He flew 2,530 ground-attack missions on the Eastern Front and another 430 missions flying the Fw-190. Rudel was severely wounded on 8 February 1945, requiring the amputation of his lower right leg. Undaunted, he was flying in combat again on 25 March, finally surrendering to the Americans on 8 May 1945 at the Kitzigen airfield. His wartime career was described in detail in his book *Stuka Pilot*. Rudel was a committed and unrepentant National Socialist. After the war, he founded a relief organization for Nazi war criminals, and aided fugitives to escape to Latin America or the Middle East, including helping to hide Joseph Mengele. He became a military advisor and arms dealer in South America, supporting the Peron



government in Argentina, the Pinochet regime in Chile and the Stroessner government in Paraguay. Several of his business dealings were with former Nazi's, including Otto Skorzeny and Klaus Barbie. Despite missing a leg, he was an avid sportsman and mountaineer, succeeding in climbing Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Americas. Rudel was married three times, coincidentally to three women named Ursula.



Gerhard Schmidhuber (9 April 1894 – 11 February 1945) Schmidhuber was commanding officer of the 13th Panzer Division during World War II. When the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944, Schmidhuber was supreme commander of German army forces in that country. In that capacity, he had extensive dealings with the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and after being threatened that he would subsequently be treated as a war criminal, prevented the liquidation of the Jewish ghetto. The massacre was stopped at the last minute thanks to the courage and daring action of Wallenberg, but many believe – and some survival reports support the idea – that Schmidhuber did not do so to save himself but as an act of humanity. Schmidhuber was killed in action in the Battle of Budapest, during the chaos of the survivors attempting to break through the encircling Soviet forces. He was a recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves.

Otto Skorzeny (12 June 1908 – 5 July 1975) was an Austrian SS-Obersturmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) in the German Waffen-SS during World War II. During the war, he was involved in a string of operations, including the rescue mission that freed the deposed Italian dictator Benito Mussolini from captivity. In October 1944, Hitler sent Skorzeny to Hungary after receiving word that Hungary's Regent, Admiral Miklós



Horthy, was secretly negotiating with the Red Army. The surrender of Hungary would have cut off the million German troops still fighting in the Balkan peninsula. Skorzeny, in a daring "snatch" codenamed Operation Panzerfaust (known as Operation Eisenfaust in Germany),

kidnapped Horthy's son Miklós Horthy Jr. and forced his father to resign as head of state. A pro-Nazi government under dictator Ferenc Szálasi was then installed in Hungary. The success of the operation earned Skorzeny promotion to Obersturmbannführer. (The picture shows Skorzeny in Budapest on 16 Oct 1944.) Skorzeny had a colorful career after the war as well, including recruiting a staff of former Wehrmacht officers to train the Egyptian Army for Nasser in the 1950's (one of the people he provided commando training to was Yasser Arafat), acting as a bodyguard for Eva Peron, and conducting operations for the Mossad in the 1960's. Skorzeny never renounced Nazi-ism and created a post-war organization (Die Spinne, or The Spider) that helped hundreds of former Nazis escape Germany to other countries.



Ferenc Szálasi (6 January 1897 – 12 March 1946) was the leader of the fascist Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (a coalition of right wing groups), the "Leader of the Nation" (Nemzetvezető), being both Head of State and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary's "Government of National Unity" (Nemzeti Összefogás Kormány) for the final six months of Hungary's participation in World War II, after the German coup had removed Miklós Horthy by force. The photo is

of Szálasi in Budapest shortly after seizing power. Szálasi was a retired Major of the General Staff and reportedly a "man of little ability and less tact." His followers regarded him as a Magyar patriot, but the Germans thought of him as an "irritating fantast" and a "dreamer, not a politician, who was obsessed with his 'sacred' mission." He was an ardent fascist and his "Quisling government" had little other intention or ability but to maintain fascism and to maintain control in Nazi-occupied portions of Hungary as the Soviet Union invaded. During his brief rule, Szálasi's men murdered 10,000–15,000 Jews. His government promoted martial law, courts-martial, executed those who were considered dangerous for the state and the continuation of the war. He conscripted young and old into the remaining Hungarian Army and sent them into hopeless battles against the Red Army. Following the war, he was executed after a trial by the Hungarian court for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during World War II.

Warrant Officer **Dezső Szentgyörgyi** (16 January 1915 – 28 August 1971, second from right in the photo) was the highest scoring Hungarian fighter ace of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Air Force in World War II. He was trained as a fighter pilot, and took part in operations in northern Hungary, flying the Fiat CR.32. In summer 1942 he was transferred to the 1/1 "Dongó" (Bumblebee) Fighter Squadron in the Soviet front. He flew the



Reggiane Re.2000 Falco (MÁVAG Héja), then the Messerschmitt Bf 109G. He shot down his first aircraft on 7 August 1942 in a friendly fire accident, while flying a Re.2000, the victim being a German Heinkel He 111 bomber that opened fire on him during while Szentgyörgyi was trying to identify the aircraft. His first victory over an enemy fighter was almost a year later, 26 June 1943, a Soviet fighter, a Yak-1 or Yak-7, on Gresnoje. His record on the Eastern Front was 142 sorties and 6 kills. The 101. Honi Légvédelmi Vadászrepülő Osztály (101st "Puma" Fighter Group) was formed on 1 May 1944. Szentgyörgyi was transferred to the 101/2 "Retek" (Radish) Fighter Squadron. He continued to score his kills among the Pumas, and shot down 6 American planes. By the summer of 1944 he was a flight leader. He was promoted to Ensign on 16 November 1944. After the "American Season" ended, once again Soviet fighters became the main enemy. Dezső scored an additional 17 kills. He achieved his last air victory on 16 April 1945, a Yak-9 on Guttenbrunn. He never crashed a plane due to pilot error, and he was never shot down. By the end of the war he had completed more than 220 sorties, and had 29 confirmed kills; the most successful Hungarian fighter pilot. After the war, he returned home and became a pilot of the MASZOVLET (Hungarian-Soviet Airlines) between 1946 and 1949. Between 1950 and 1956 he spent several years in Communist prisons, before becoming a pilot of the renamed Malév Hungarian Airlines again, logging 12,334 flight hours and covering more than 5 million kilometres in the air. On 28 August 1971 Szentgyörgyi died in a crash near Copenhagen while flying an Ilyushin Il-18 (HA-MOC). He had been due to retire in less than three weeks. The MH 59th "Szentgyörgyi Dezső" Air Base of the Hungarian Air Force in Kecskemét (equipped with MiG-29 and JAS 39 Gripen fighters) is named in his honor.



Fyodor Ivanovich Tolbukhin (June 16, 1894 – October 17, 1949) was the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front during the events in Hungarian Rhapsody. He volunteered for the Imperial Army in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. He was steadily promoted, advancing from private to captain by 1916. He was also decorated for bravery multiple times. He was commander of the 58th Army during the Battle of Stalingrad, and impressed Yeremenko sufficiently to be given command of a Front. During the Summer Campaign, from June to October 1944, Tolbukhin and

Malinovsky launched their invasion of the Balkans and were able to conquer most of Romania. On September 12, 1944, two days after Malinovsky was promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union, Tolbukhin was promoted to the same rank. While Malinovsky moved northwest, towards Hungary and Yugoslavia, Tolbukhin occupied Bulgaria. Starting in the Winter Campaign, Tolbukhin shifted his army to the northwest axis, thereby liberating much of Yugoslavia and invading southern Hungary (these are the forces that enter the map on the southern edge midway through the events in Hungarian Rhapsody). Tolbukhin is generally regarded as one of the finest Soviet generals of World War II. Meticulous, careful, and not overly ambitious like some Soviet commanders, Tolbukhin was well respected by fellow commanders and by his men, especially since he had a dedication to keeping casualty rates low.

Lajos Veress de Dálnok (4 October 1889 - 29 March 1976) served as commander of the Hungarian Second Army in the early part of the events portrayed in Hungarian Rhapsody. He commanded the Hungarian forces on the east map near Turda during the initial phases of the game. Veress was born into the Székely noble family. Earlier in the war, he was commander of the Hungarian First Armored Division on the Don Front, followed by command of the Hungarian 9th Corps between 1942-1944. He was appointed commander of the Second Army on 1 April 1944. When Admiral Horthy attempted to surrender Hungary to the Allies, he appointed Veress *homo regius* (the regent's deputy) should Horthy would be indisposed. As a result, the German army arrested Veress in October 1944 and turned him over to the Arrow Cross authorities; a military court sentenced him to fifteen years. He was imprisoned on 16 October 1944 in Sopronkőhida but later successfully escaped. He retired in 1946. Veress was sentenced to death on 16 April 1947 on charges of right-wing, anti-state conspiracy by a People's Tribunal by the then-Communist Hungarian government. The National Council of People's Tribunals then mitigated and changed the sentence to life imprisonment. He was released during the 1956 uprising and left the country on 3 November 1956. From 1958 on he served as chairman of the World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters.





Rudolf Viest (24 September 1890 – 1945?) was the leader of the Slovakian Uprising. After fighting during World War I (both for the Austro-Hungarian army and the Serbian army) was the only Slovak to reach general rank in the interwar Czechoslovakian army. After the German takeover, he fled to France and then England, becoming the Minister of Defense of the government-in-exile. After the start of the Slovak National Uprising on August 29, 1944, Ján Golian became the commander of the 1st Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia and urged the government-in-exile to send Viest to support the uprising. Viest returned to Slovakia during the night of October 6–7, 1944 to take official command of the uprising, and was made a member of the Slovak National Council on October 13. On October 18, 1944, the German Army started a general offensive focused on eliminating resistance in the

Slovak territory held by the insurgents. As the situation collapsed, Viest issued a final order from Donovaly during the night of 27-28 October for his forces to switch to guerrilla warfare. Viest tried to escape from German encirclement and reach the Red Army but was captured with Golian in Pohronský Bukovec. Information about his last days is unclear. Viest probably died with other Slovak generals (Augustín Malár, Ján Golian and Štefan Jurech) in the Flossenbürg concentration camp sometime in 1945. While the camp remained in operation until April 1945, records covering the possible execution of the Slovak generals are missing. It is also possible that Viest and other Slovak generals survived the war yet died later after being transferred to the Soviet Union. (Photo: http://www.vhu.cz/Image/arm.gen.%2520Rudolf%2520Viest_low.jpg).



Raoul Wallenberg (4 August 1912 – 1947-1952?) was a Swedish architect, businessman, diplomat and humanitarian. He is widely celebrated for saving tens of thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary during the Holocaust from German Nazis and Hungarian Fascists during the later stages of World War II. While serving as Sweden's special envoy in Budapest between July and December 1944, Wallenberg issued protective passports and sheltered Jews in buildings designated as Swedish territory.

On 17 January 1945, during the Siege of Budapest by the Red Army, Wallenberg was summoned to General Malinovsky's headquarters in Debrecen to answer allegations that he was engaged in espionage. Wallenberg's last recorded words were, "I'm going to Malinovsky's ... whether as a guest or prisoner I do not know yet." He was detained by SMERSH on suspicion of espionage and subsequently disappeared. He was later reported to have died on 17 July 1947 while imprisoned by the KGB secret police in the Lubyanka, the KGB headquarters and

affiliated prison in Moscow. Other reports have him surviving until 1952. The motives behind Wallenberg's arrest and imprisonment by the Soviet government, along with questions surrounding the circumstances of his death and his possible ties to US intelligence, remain mysterious and are the subject of continued speculation.

Otto Wöhler (12 July 1894 – 5 February 1987) served in staff positions for the early part of World War 2. He was Manstein's Ia (chief of staff) for the 11th Army from October 1940 through May 1942, and then Ia for Army Group Center under Field Marshal Marshal Günther von Kluge. In February 1943 he was appointed commander of I Army Corps, followed by 8 Armee and then Hitler appointed him commander of Army Group South in December 1944 after relieving General Friessner. After the war, Wöhler was tried at Nuremberg for assisting the Einsatzgruppen during his time as Manstein's chief of staff. He was convicted of implementing the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order, which allowed the murder of civilians on the pretext of counteracting partisan activity, as well as was guilty of deportations of civilians for slave labor and cooperation with Einsatzgruppen. He was imprisoned until 1951.



In addition to the bibliography found in the game specific rules, the events in Budapest are related in a few surviving diaries and memoirs. Charles Farkas (Farkas Karoly) was born in 1926 and includes his experience during the siege in his recently published memoir *Vanished by the Danube: Peace, War, Revolution, and Flight to the West*. László Dezső, a 15-year-old boy in 1944, lived at 32 Mészáros Street with his family. This area was heavily attacked because of its proximity to the Southern Railway Station (Déli pályaudvar) and the strategic importance of the hill. Dezső kept a diary throughout the siege. The memoirs of András Németh also describe the siege and the bombing of the empty school buildings which he and his fellow soldiers used as an observation post.

The memoirs of Heinz Landau, *Goodbye Transylvania*, present a German soldier's view of the battle. *Pinball Games: Arts of Survival in Nazi and Communist Eras*, written by George F. Eber, a richly detailed account of a 20-year-old Hungarian and his family living through the siege, was published posthumously in 2010. It chronicles the clever strategies employed for survival and outlined the boredom and terror of a family that was trapped, but would not capitulate. Eber, who had become an internationally-known architect, included sketches with the memoir. One of them depicts a Russian soldier silhouetted against a Budapest wall on the first night the Germans were driven out of his neighborhood. The memoir also includes an account of World War II and the post-war transition of the country into Soviet-style Communism.

The memoirs of the 14-year-old dispatch runner of the Vannay Volunteer Battalion, Ervin Y. Galantay, give an insight into the battle and urban combat. The diary of the young runner

describes day-to-day life and survival of both civilians and soldiers. It was published in English by the Militaria press in Budapest in 2005, under the title *Boy Soldier*.

Joseph Szentkiralyi, who had worked in the United States prior to World War II, had been deported to Hungary as an enemy alien after the war began. During the siege, he and his family endured constant artillery bombardment and street-by-street tank and infantry battles between the Germans, the remnants of the Royal Hungarian Army, and the attacking Romanian, and Soviet forces. Szentkiralyi, wanted for questioning by Hungarian army officers, hid on the upper floors of buildings during bombing raids to avoid capture. To prevent starvation and help keep their families alive, Szentkiralyi and others risked their lives to leave their bomb shelters at night and butcher frozen horse carcasses they found in the streets. At the end, daily rations consisted of melted snow, horse meat, and 150 grams of bread. Szentkiralyi worked for the Allies after the war ended. Learning that he faced imminent arrest, he fled to Switzerland to avoid detention and likely execution by the Soviets.

Sources: Wikipedia, Axis History Forum, feldgrau.com, worldwartwo.filminspector.com and research by Stéphane Acquaviva. Information on Soviet personalities is significantly more difficult to locate than for the Axis forces!