



World War II Wargames Rules

ACTION
SECOND EDITION



CAMPAIGN FORTRESS BUDAPEST





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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

This book is an expansion to *Bolt Action*, the 28mm scale tabletop wargame set during World War II. Whilst there is historical detail within the narrative, this volume is not a history book – it is first and foremost a wargaming supplement. The intention of the team who put this book together was to provide a good mixture of scenarios, new units, and new rules whilst still giving some historical background for context. Some previously published rules and units have also been reprinted – this is to save players the expense of buying additional books for content which is vital to this volume, but might form only a small part of other books.

The Siege of Budapest, the Soviet invasion of Hungary that led up to it, and the desperate German offensives to relieve the city covered kilometres of frontline; these battles lasted eight months and involved hundreds of thousands of combatants. Many important battles have not been presented as scenarios in this book, merely due to the constraints of the book size and the authors wish to present a variety of very different scenarios for players. For those who are interested in a more in depth look at the actual historical events surrounding the Hungarian campaign, a bibliography is provided [here](#).



Panzer reconnaissance men attempt to disrupt the Soviet advance

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Throughout the autumn of 1944 the Axis forces in the Carpathian Basin were fighting for their very existence. The Red Army, pushing ever westward, was nearing the peak of its strength, with close to 6.7 million soldiers advancing on a front that ran from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic. The Axis frontline in Romania collapsed on 23 August as the Red Army defeated the combined Romanian and German forces of Army Group South Ukraine in the Iasi-Chisinau operation. Faced with complete destruction of their country, these defeats prompted the Romanians to switch sides and their monarch, King Michael, to declare war on their former allies and dismiss the pro-Axis Prime Minister, Ion Antonescu. German units in Romania suddenly found themselves in hostile territory. This, coupled with the rapid advance of the Soviet 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts, allowed the Red Army to maul the badly disorganized German units fleeing towards Hungary. The generals of these two Soviet Fronts, Malinovsky and Tolbukhin, were reported to have annihilated 13 enemy divisions and taken 106,000 prisoners. On 12 September, Stalin promoted both men to Marshal of the Soviet Union in recognition of this victory.

Bulgaria followed Romania and defected on 8 September, leaving the Kingdom of Hungary (alongside tiny Croatia) as the last of Germany's European allies. She would fight to the bitter end and would pay the price accordingly. Following the destruction of the German forces in Romania, units of the Soviet 2nd Ukrainian Front moved up from the south east and arrived at Hungary's southern Transylvanian border on 25 August. Despite a spirited defence by the Hungarian 1st Army fighting in Galicia, the 4th Ukrainian Front also broke through from the north east, creating a giant pincer holding the Carpathian Mountains in its claw. Rapidly mobilised Hungarian Border Guard battalions were joined by retreating German forces coming from Romania and both sides raced to secure the mountain passes of Transylvania.

Faced by an overwhelming local superiority in armour, the Axis forces were unable to hold back the Red tide with the hastily improvised forces available. Soviet armour broke through the Carpathian Mountain passes and entered the Great Hungarian Plain. At the same time as Allied paratroopers were dropping

from the skies over Holland in *Operation Market Garden*, German Panzer divisions in Hungary were launching *Operation Debrecen*, an audacious plan to cut off and destroy these spearheads of the Soviet mechanised forces at the vital city of Debrecen, resulting in one of the most desperate and swirling tank battles of the war. Although the counter-attacking panzers dealt a massive blow to the overextended Red Army on the Tisza River at Debrecen, they were again forced to fall back to what was the last ditch in Hungary, the Danube.

Sitting astride the Danube and blocking this traditional pathway for eastern invaders for centuries was the glittering capital city of Budapest. Soviet armoured battle groups crushed the weak forces on the city outskirts and encircled the Hungarian capital, trapping 76,000 Axis troops and 800,000 civilians within. Whilst the Battle of the Bulge raged in Belgium, the streets of the Hungarian capital were fought over during the same bleak winter, with the siege lasting over 102 gruelling days. It was one of the longest and bloodiest city battles of the war, equalled in ferocity by only Stalingrad and Warsaw. The Axis defenders trapped in the city were a random yet formidable collection of units: dismounted SS cavalymen, Panzergrenadiers of the *Feldherrnhalle* Divisions, Hungarian volunteer militias, and Assault Gun Batteries were faced by no less than 300,000 men of five Soviet infantry Corps and one Romanian Corps.

TOP SECRET

THE TREATY OF TRIANON

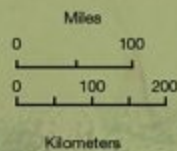
The Kingdom of Hungary joined the Axis side of the conflict in 1941 as a result of its desire to recover territory lost following the defeat in the First World War and the disastrous Treaty of Trianon. This treaty, signed and enforced by the Allied nations on 4 June 1920, detached 67% of Hungary's territory together with 60% of its population. Sizeable *Magyar* (As the Hungarian people call themselves) ethnic populations found themselves living outside the home nation as the borders were redrawn. During the 1930s and early 1940s, Hungary was preoccupied with the regaining these vast territories and populations.

This required strong armed forces to defeat the neighbouring states and this was something Hungary could not do as, much like Germany, it had severe restrictions placed on her armed forces. The army was limited to 35,000 men and was forbidden from acquiring tanks or aircraft. Instead, the Hungarian Regent, Vice Admiral Miklós Horthy, made alliances with fascist Italy which lent political and, later, military assistance. Hungary drifted further into the Axis camp on the eve of the Second World War when it received help from Adolf Hitler's Third Reich in the First and Second Vienna Awards, where it was able to reclaim part of its lost territories from Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. As Hitler's war erupted across Europe, the Kingdom of Hungary tried to remain neutral, having already achieved its immediate aims without having to go to war. Horthy even denied

Hitler access to possible staging points within Hungary to invade Poland in their campaign of September 1939, due to the eternal friendship between the Polish and Hungarian people. Hungary even welcomed Polish refugees, including many soldiers, following their defeat.

Eventually Hungary had to give in to Germany's demands due to the debt it owed Hitler for backing their diplomatic recovery of territory. Pressured to allow German forces to cross Hungarian territory to invade Yugoslavia to the south, the Hungarians relented, and on 20 November 1940, Hungary signed the Tripartite Pact and became a member of the Axis with Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy.

THE BATTLE FOR HUNGARY 1944-45



Holding Budapest became an obsession for the Führer. This capital city of his only remaining, non-puppet European ally was also the gateway to Vienna and the Reich's southern flank. If that wasn't enough, the Germans last remaining oil fields were at Lake Balaton, only 200km southwest of the besieged city. After the failure of the German Ardennes offensive, Hitler transferred half of all remaining Panzer Divisions on the eastern front to the Hungarian theatre, even as the Red Army was on the Oder River, the virtual doorstep of Berlin. The vaunted veterans of the IV SS Panzer Corps launched *Operations Konrad I–III* attempting to break through to the beleaguered defenders.

Stalin too became obsessed with taking Budapest, and quickly. He had his eyes on the post war division of central and Eastern Europe and wanted to push the boundaries of the Red Army's conquests ahead of the planned Yalta conference in February 1945. He ordered Marshal Malinovsky, commander-in-chief of the 2nd Ukrainian Front to crush the defenders and capture Budapest within 5 days. The Siege of Budapest would not prove the quick victory Stalin desired.

THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN ARMY

The Royal Hungarian Army was created in 1922 after the defeat and breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the First World War. Initially limited to 35,000 men under the Treaty of Trianon, the army peaked at nearly 1 million men during the battle for Hungary itself in 1944. Conscription was introduced on a national basis in 1939, which filled the ranks of three Field Armies of infantry. Thanks to possessing a substantial industrial base, and with assistance from the Germans, the Hungarians raised and deployed two Armoured Field Divisions, one mechanised Cavalry Division, and eight Assault gun Battalions. The Hungarian's commitment to the Axis campaigns in the Soviet Union varied throughout the war. The Carpathian Army Group was sent as the initial contribution to the German's Operation *Barbarossa*. This unit contained the most battle-ready forces the Hungarians could muster, formed with the 1st Mountain Brigade, the 8th Border Guards Brigade, and the Mobile Corps with its Toldi light tanks and Csaba armoured cars. After the invasion the 2nd Army was mobilised and sent deep into the Caucasus, holding the flank of Stalingrad where it was destroyed on the banks of the Don River in the winter of 1942–43. The army made reforming efforts in 1943–44 to be able to face the realities of modern armoured warfare. This allowed the Royal Hungarian Army to at least hold its own against the invading Soviet and Romanian forces during 1944. The battles of Debrecen and Tordá were the finest hour of the *Honvédség*. After the disaster of the siege of Budapest, the Hungarian 3rd army continued fighting on to the end, withdrawing into Austria, and surrendering to the US forces there.

GLOSSARY OF HUNGARIAN TERMS

Magyar: The name of the original tribe of horsemen who settled in the Danube basin and created Hungary as a nation.

Magyar Király Honvédség: Royal Hungarian Army.

Honvédség: Homeland defence.

Honvéd: Homeland defender, a term for the average Hungarian soldier.

Zrínyi: An assault gun named after Miklós Zrínyi, a Hungarian warrior poet who fought in the 30 Years War and against the Ottoman Empire.

Csaba: A Hungarian name meaning shepherd, who was also one of Attila the Hun's sons, which gave its name to a locally designed and made armoured car.

Turán: A locally manufactured medium tank named after the ancient homeland of Hungarian tribes in

Central Asia

Nimród: The Swedish designed, but Hungarian made, self-propelled anti-aircraft vehicle which supported the Armoured Divisions. Named after the father of the ancestors of the Huns and Magyars. Also, a manic hunter in the old Hungarian tales.

Toldi: Hungary's own light tank, named after Miklos Toldi, legendary 14th century Hungarian warrior and hero.

ARMY RANKS

Őrnagy: Major

Százados: Captain

Főhadnagy: 1st Lieutenant

Hadnagy: 2nd Lieutenant

Zászlós: Ensign

Törzsőrmester: Technical Sergeant

Őrmester: Sergeant

Tizedes: Corporal

Honvéd: Private



Hungarian forces in Northern Transylvania by Darko Pavlovic © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Men at Arms 449: The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II.

FIGHTING FOR TRANSYLVANIA



On 27 August 1944 the T-34's of the Soviet 23rd Tank Corps crossed the mountainous frontier at the Ojtózi Pass (Oituz in German and Romanian), bringing the fighting to Hungarian soil for the first time in the war. The collapse of Axis Romania had allowed Soviet mechanised and cavalry forces to begin pouring through the Carpathian mountain passes into Transylvania before a solid defence could be deployed. The front of *Heeresgruppe Süd Ukraine* (Army Group South Ukraine) had opened up so rapidly that this left only local Hungarian troops to secure the border. Geography was also working against the Axis defenders with the revised 1940 border between Romania and Hungary leaving a wedge of Hungarian territory exposed and surrounded on three sides by Romania.

So, it was that the Hungarian 24th Border Guard Battalion found itself tasked with holding the Ojtózi River Gorge. The battalion was mobilised in early 1944 and had 1,650 men under arms. Divided into three field companies, two fortress companies, and supporting machine gun, pioneer, and anti-tank platoons, the forward elements of this unit saw off the Soviet probing attacks on 25 August. The main assault was launched by the Soviet 23rd Tank Corps two days later and a large Hungarian patrol was caught in an ambush and almost wiped out. After a fierce but brief battle the Hungarians were pushed back down the valley to the village of Sósmező. The village defences were manned by the 1st Fortress Company, which checked the advance of the Red Army riflemen.

By now some German units had started to arrive to assist the local Hungarian defenders and join the fighting. *Gebirgsjäger*, specialist mountain infantrymen of 4. *Gebirgsdivision*, were transferred from the north to join the Border Guards at Ojtózi Pass. Other German units such as *Kampfgruppe Abraham* (A collection of stragglers and rear area support troops) and *Kampfgruppe Fessner* (II & III Battalions of Grenadier Regiment 42) also joined the defence of other mountain passes and played an important part in holding them.



Germans and Hungarians attempt to hold the Ojtózi Pass

SCENARIO 1: HOLD THE OJTÓZI PASS

Sósmező is the first village in the Kingdom of Hungary to fall into Soviet hands. The previous fighting in the village has destroyed many of the buildings and cost many civilian lives. The positions of the Hungarian Border Guard's defences hold the high ground overlooking the village and the 1st Fortress Company has used accurate rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire to keep the Soviet infantry pinned down in the village. Joined by the *Gebirgsjäger*, the Border Guards use their local knowledge of the terrain to launch a counter-attack before the Soviets can bring their tanks up the mountain pass.

FORCES

The Soviet player is the attacker and has a 25%-point advantage over the Axis player (e.g. 1,000pts versus 1,250pts). The Soviet reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book. The Axis player is the defender and their reinforced platoons are chosen from the *Carpathian Mountains Border Guards* Theatre Selector [here](#). Note that this selector's special rule will be in effect.

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery is set up with a village centre at 24" from the Soviet short table edge, on a road running through it which enters and exits on the short table edges. The Soviet player places an objective marker on the road within 12" of the Axis players short table edge. The terrain on both long edges should consist of wooded hills and rocky outcrops, representing the mountain valley sides. The Axis player has one bunker they may place within 12" of their short table edge to cover the road down the mountain pass, this uses the bunker rules on page 127 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

DEPLOYMENT

The Soviet player must deploy first, splitting their force in half (rounding up), and setting up their starting force in the village itself, within 12" of the village centre, which itself is 24" on from the Soviet short table edge and 24" from either long table edge, as shown on the map. All remaining Soviet units are in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). Note that no vehicle units

may be chosen to be deployed in the initial force in the village, they must start the game in reserve. The Axis player's deployment zone is 12" onto the table from their short table edge. The Axis player may set-up up to half of their units in this zone, but may choose not to set up any at all. Any units not deployed at the start of the game will be formed into a first wave. These units can enter the table from any point along either of the long table edges, and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.



Scenario 1: Hold the Ojtózi Pass

SPECIAL RULE

MOUNTAIN PASS

The Soviet forces are hemmed into the valley and the surrounding mountains are in the hands of the Hungarians and their German allies, Soviet units cannot outflank in this scenario.



German Gebirgsjäger of the 4th Mountain Division join the defence

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must hold the mountain pass by inflicting as much damage as they can during their initial counter-attack before the Soviet tanks arrive. The Soviets must break out of the village and force their way down the mountain pass by securing the road whereby allowing their armoured elements to advance.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Axis player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter anywhere along either long table edge and must be given a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed, and five victory points for controlling the objective on the road. To control the objective there must be one of your own units within 3" and no enemy units within 3". Vehicles may claim the objective but not empty transport vehicles.

AFTERMATH

The fighting at Ojtózi Gorge was an outstanding example of fighting by the Hungarian border troops. The commander of 1st Fortress Company, *Hadnagy* (Lieutenant) Sándor Megyeri, his deputy *Hadnagy* Ferenc Kovács, and platoon commander reserve *Zászlós* (Ensign) János Vác all received the Hungarian Order of Merit Cross with War Decoration. This was the first time in the war that three officers from the same unit had been awarded this medal in a single engagement. Despite these heroics, the Hungarians and Germans were forced to withdraw on 1 September as the Soviets were finally able to deploy their tanks against the tenacious defenders. The Germans had no Panzers of their own to counter this and the 20mm Anti-tank rifles and 37mm Anti-tank guns of the Border Guards could do nothing against the T-34 tanks. The Axis defenders withdrew to Szalutárisz before beginning their retreat to the Maros River to establish a new defensive line.



German Army Medium Mortar team

THE BATTLE OF TORDÁ



With the Soviet victory completed in Romania and the Red Army fighting through the frontier in the eastern Carpathians, the Hungarian command decided to launch an immediate attack into the southern Carpathians across the border into Romania. The objective was to seize the mountain passes and stop the Red Army using them to invade Hungary from the south as well as east. It was also hoped that a swift move could catch the hated Romanians off balance before they could gather and reorganize their forces to join the Soviets after their recent defection to the Allied side.

Planning began in August and the recently mobilised Hungarian 2nd Army was assigned to carry out the operation. The original 2nd Army had actually been all but wiped out on the flank of Stalingrad in early 1943, but with the survival of the nation at stake it was now reactivated. The army was split into two forces with the IX Corps sent to defend Northern Transylvania and the II Corps, led by Lieutenant General Lajos Veress, sent south for this offensive operation. By itself not a very potent force, the inexperienced 7th and 9th Field Replacement Divisions that made up II Corps were soon joined by veteran units transferred from the north. These units, which had been fighting in Galicia since early 1944, consisted of the 25th Infantry Division, the 10th Assault Gun Battalion, and the 2nd Armoured Division giving the task force some much needed offensive capability. This campaign was to be an entirely Hungarian affair, with the Germans occupied by their fighting withdrawal out of the northern part of Romania.

Facing the Hungarians was the Romanian 1st Army, mostly made up of training and replacement units. This was soon joined by the 4th Army, bringing their forces up to 11 divisions, though not all were at full strength or combat ready. The Royal Hungarian Army's II Corps crossed the Romanian border at dawn on September 5th and took the local border guard forces by surprise, with most of the Romanian infantry surrendering or fleeing.



A Hungarian Honvéd Squad advances through the countryside

THE RED ARMY ARRIVES

The situation for the average Hungarian infantryman, or *Honvéd* (home defender), became a lot deadlier when the Romanians were joined by the forward elements of Marshal Malinovsky's 2nd Ukrainian Front. The right flank of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was not able to cross the Eastern Carpathians quickly due to the difficult terrain and tenacious defence by the Hungarian Border Guards during August, so the left wing swung upwards to enter Hungary from the passes in the south. The Vulcan pass was swiftly occupied and the towns of Brassó and Nagyszeben captured. The Red Army's operational target was the city of Kolozsvár, just inside Hungary, and they expected little resistance.

Red Army T-34's were suddenly confronted with Hungarian Turán tanks of the 2nd Armoured Division, which were ranging deeper into Romanian territory. Faced with the reality of substantial Soviet armoured forces and the Southern Carpathian mountain passes already in enemy hands, the Hungarian command gave up on their initial plan and instead were forced to take up a defensive stance on 10 September. General Lajos Veress withdrew his troops to terrain better suited to setting up a strong defence. The steep banks of the Maros River were perfect, and 3 battalions of the 25th Infantry Division began digging in on 12 September along its northern bank to bar the way into the homeland. More of the division's battalions were en route but would be days away from reaching the battle. Key to this defensive line was holding the town of Tordá, with its vital crossing points and mountains protecting its flanks.

The Soviet high command was also surprised by the unexpected Hungarian offensive but directed Marshal Malinovsky to crush the Axis defenders in Transylvania and attack north to unite with the 4th Ukrainian front, effectively outflanking and destroying the entire German *Army Group South Ukraine* as it retreated out of Romania. The stakes for the Hungarians increased as the battle for Tordá unfolded as an effort to prevent this disaster.

With potent forces already in the area, the 6th Guards Tank Army launched an attack on Tordá on 13 and 14 September, in tandem with the Romanian 20th Infantry Training Division. The Romanians attacked the Hungarian

positions from the east while the Soviet tanks attempted to outflank from both the east and west. The Hungarians were forced to deploy German style blocking units with weakened manpower but large amounts of firepower to try and stop the onslaught. One such position was held by men of the 25th Assault Artillery Battalion's 1st Battery. Manning Pak 40 anti-tank guns instead of their usual assault guns they managed to knock out or immobilise 10 Soviet tanks while under constant mortar and artillery barrage. Directing the guns was Captain Vilmos Vértes, who won the Officers' Gold Medal for Bravery but was killed the next day when the Red Army riflemen assaulted the position. It was actions such as these that prevented the city from being surrounded by these early attacks.

DIRECT ASSAULT ON TORDÁ

With the attacks on the flanks having been beaten back and the arrival of the Hungarian 2nd Mountain Division to reinforce these steep flank positions, Marshal Malinovsky directed his next major attack toward the centre of the Hungarian line at Sósfürdő (the salt baths) in front of the city. The attack commenced on 15 September after a massive artillery bombardment. This assault forced the Hungarian 26th Infantry Regiment to withdraw. With the situation becoming critical, General Veress committed the 2nd Armoured Division to counter attack, having been held in the second defensive line to the north of Torda to stop Soviet breakthroughs such as this. The Turán tanks and motorised infantry slammed into the Soviet and Romanian attackers but could not break them. The Allied resistance was so stubborn that by nightfall the Soviets and Romanians still held two small bridgeheads on the north bank of the Maros River. By morning these had merged into one substantial foothold across the plateau to the east of Tordá.

The Hungarians immediately assembled a battlegroup to eliminate this bridgehead, consisting of the veteran infantrymen of the 25th Division supported by the 10th Assault Artillery Battalion's Zrínyi II assault howitzers, Hungary's own design inspired by the German StuG. The Zrínyi was a low-slung, riveted beast carrying the deadly 105mm howitzer, which could knock out tanks as well as annihilate even dug in enemy infantry. Their crews were highly motivated and the Assault Artillery was considered an elite formation. This attack began at 1100 hours on 19 September, preceded by an accurate artillery strike. Despite this, the bridgehead again held out. The extremely tough resistance put up by the Soviet infantry can be illustrated by one 300-man

battalion of the 4th Guards Rifle Division, whose 300 men who held their position, even though they were encircled. The tenacious defence cost the Guardsmen dearly as according to Soviet records, 200 of their number lay dead where they fought.

The next few days saw a lull in the fighting as both sides brought up fresh troops and prepared their forces for the next attacks. However, this would not last long as at 08:00 on 22 September the Soviets unleashed their heaviest artillery bombardment yet.

TOP SECRET

MARSHAL MALINOVSKY

Marshal of the Soviet Union Rodion Yakovlevich Malinovsky was one of the tough, confident commanders which had stepped up to lead the Red Army out of the disasters of 1941. The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, Marshal Malinovsky led the initial Soviet invasion of the Kingdom of Hungary in August 1944. Born near Odessa in 1898, he joined the Tsarist army at age 15 when he snuck aboard a troop train heading to the frontlines. Despite his age, Malinovsky convinced the unit to enlist him and he fought on both the eastern and western fronts of World War I. As part of the Russian Legion he was wounded in the left arm while fighting in France. He joined the Red Army on returning to Russia to fight in the Russian Civil War in 1919, and afterwards remained in the military, and graduated from the Frunze Military Academy in 1930. Malinovsky volunteered to fight for the Republicans against the fascist forces of General Franco and his Italian and German allies in the Spanish Civil War in 1936. He helped direct operations there until returning to Russia in 1938, being awarded the Order of Lenin and Order of the Red Banner in recognition of his service there. This service possibly saved his life as he was far away from the Motherland when Stalin purged his officer class in 1937.

With Germany's military build-up on the borders of the Soviet Union in 1941, Malinovsky was given command of the recently raised 48th Rifle Corps and deployed close to the Romanian border. Although caught up in the Red Army's catastrophic defeats during Operation *Barbarossa*, Malinovsky emerged as one of the few competent commanders. He led fighting withdrawals along the Black Sea, in the Donbass, and launched offensives during the second battle of Kharkov. By December 1942 he was commander of the 66th Army on the northern flank of the city of Stalingrad. Here he led an armoured counter attack to destroy the German relief attempt to rescue the 250,000 men of the trapped 6th Army. For the first time in the war the German armoured forces suffered a major defeat, Malinovsky was awarded the Order of Surovov and the Axis troops fate was sealed.

In early 1943, he commanded the South Front, followed by command of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, with which he liberated western Ukraine. By mid-September 1944, Malinovsky found himself in command of the powerful 2nd Ukrainian Front. Unleashing a highly successful mechanised offensive against Romania, and alongside Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian Front they captured or killed 215,000 German and 200,000 Romanian troops. On September 10, both Generals were promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union for their crushing victory. Malinovsky soon faced the wounded, but still vicious, German panzer forces on the plains of Debrecen and on the approach roads to Budapest. His forces

had to overcome bitter opposition and pressure from Stalin to take the Hungarian capital in the 108-day siege. After taking Budapest, Malinovsky ended the war in Europe by liberating Vienna on 4th April and Brno in the Czech lands on 26 April. Stalin awarded him the Order of Victory for establishing Soviet dominance over the Danubian heartland of central Europe. Compared with other Soviet Marshals he was a modest man, who showed respect to his subordinates and refrained from sending home railcars full of looted wares from conquered territories. After the German surrender Marshal Malinovsky was transferred to Russia's eastern front to face the Japanese as commander of the Transbaikal Front. Here he was the architect of the near complete destruction of Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria. After the end of the Great Patriotic War Malinovsky continued to serve in the Red Army, and in the 1950s–60s he was in charge of restructuring and strengthening it. Malinovsky served as Defence Minister of the Soviet Union from 1957 to 1967, until his death on 31 March 1967 from illness.



Soviet T-34/85 with tank riders

SCENARIO 2: INTO THE VALLEY OF DEATH

This maelstrom of steel was directed into the narrow space around the Sósfürdő salt baths. The Soviets attacked with the men of the 180th Rifle Division supported by some 40 T-34/85 tanks of the 5th Guards Tank Corps, with their accompanying infantry riding the tanks into battle. These forces were to kick in the front door of Tordá and prise open the defence. The 4th Guards Rifle Division and Romanian 7th Infantry Division also advanced on the eastern flank into the Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division. This meant it would be up to the Hungarian 25th Infantry Division and their comrades in the 10th Assault Artillery to hold the line.

FORCES

This scenario uses the *Tank Wars* rules and armoured platoon structure. The Soviet armoured platoon can be chosen from the *Guards Mechanised Brigade* (see [here](#)), with the exception that only Sherman tanks equipped with the 75mm gun are available, the 76mm variants were not available until November 1944. For an extra challenge, the allied player may choose to take an infantry force from the *1944 Allied Romanian Infantry Division* reinforced platoon Theatre Selector [here](#). The Hungarian armoured platoon is chosen from the *Hungarian Assault Artillery Battery* Theatre Selector [here](#). In addition, the Hungarian player has one of his Zrínyi II assault howitzers upgraded to be led by Ensign János Bozsoki for free (see [here](#)).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery is set up with the buildings of the Sósfürdő salt baths in the centre of the Hungarian deployment zone and a road running through it which enters and exits on the long table edges. The rest of the table can be populated with hills, rocky outcrops, and lightly wooded areas. The Soviet player places 3 objective markers which the Hungarian player must defend. These must be placed within 12" of the Hungarian long table edge, and no two objectives may be within 12" of each

other.



A Hungarian Tiger stalks its prey in the dark



Scenario 2: Into the Valley of Death

DEPLOYMENT

The Hungarian player must deploy first, deploying all units onto the table minus the Zrínyi II assault howitzers (see the rules for Ensign János Bozsoki, [here](#)), these deploy later. The Hungarian player's deployment zone is 12" onto the long table edge as indicated on the map. The opposite long table edge is the Soviet players edge. The Soviet player now chooses at least half of his units to form a first wave, this may be the entire force. Any remaining units will be held in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

HIDDEN SETUP

The units of the Hungarian force benefit from the Hidden rule (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) if they are set up in cover.

DIRECT ASSAULT

The Soviet forces are focusing their attack on a specific point to force a crossing

of the Maros River and break into the city of Tordá. Sósfürdő is also in a valley, and as such no units on either side may outflank in this scenario.

OBJECTIVE

The Hungarian player must hold Sósfürdő, the front gate to Tordá. The Soviets must break through by shattering the Hungarian defensive line around the salt baths.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Soviet player must move any units held in the first wave onto the table. These units can enter anywhere along either long table edge and must be given a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.



Soviet Officer Team

TOP SECRET

LEGENDS OF HUNGARY: ENSIGN JÁNOS BOZSOKI

János was born on 3 April 1918, in the small village of Nagybjom in south western Hungary. Completing grammar school and then moving to the University of Law, his studies were cut short when he was called up to join the army in 1940. Here he received training as a reserve officer at the Ludovica Defence Academy before being posted to the 10th Field Artillery Regiment. He was deployed with his unit to the river Don where he served as an artillery observer and liaison officer assigned to the infantry. János survived this ill-fated campaign which saw the near complete destruction of the Hungarian 2nd Army on the flank of Stalingrad, but he was wounded in the winter battles. Here he was promoted to Ensign in December 1942.

Ensign Bozsoki was one of the first volunteers for the new armoured branch of the artillery in late 1943. After completing his training on the Hungarian designed Zrínyi II assault howitzers, he was assigned to the 10th Assault Artillery Battalion. His unit was mobilised and sent to Transylvania where he took command of the six assault guns of 2nd Battery at the city of Tordá, where his unit was ordered to seal off the road at the Sósfürdő. The Soviet attack on the morning of 22 September ran into Bozsoki's assault guns, which he had expertly placed in ambush positions on either side of the road. The young ensign had told his men to not open fire until the Soviet tanks were almost on

top of them.

The first T-34 rumbled down the road and was allowed to approach within 50m of the hidden Zrínyis before all hell broke loose. Within a couple of minutes 18 Soviet tanks were knocked out, for the loss of one Zrínyi's track being shot away. Responding to the desperate call for help from a nearby Hungarian infantry unit which had become encircled by the attacking Soviets, Ensign Bozsoki left his position with his assault howitzer and after a successful rescue effort returned to find his five assault guns had been knocked out.

Not giving up, Ensign Bozsoki used the cover of darkness to return alone on foot to his howitzers and found two Zrínyis which were still operational, as well as four of his wounded men. He collected and carried the seriously wounded soldiers to one of the serviceable Zrínyis and drove them back to the Hungarian lines. Once his men were in medical care, he again returned for the second recoverable Zrínyi. Again, he was in luck and the Red Army did not interfere. That same night he organised a rescue mission to recover the other three knocked-out Zrínyis and find the missing men of 2nd Battery. The rescue team consisted of 4 Zrínyis from the 1st Battery plus Ensign Bozsoki's vehicles. This time the Russians were alert, so the Hungarians shelled the valley with fragmentation shells to clear the way first. Reaching the abandoned assault howitzers, they were able to tow the damaged vehicles back to the Hungarian lines. For his immense bravery and care for his men, Ensign Bozsoki was awarded the Gold Medal for Bravery, only the 7th member of the officer Corps to be so decorated during the war so far.

After the battle at Tordá he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and became trapped inside the Budapest cauldron with the rest of his unit. He fought hard during the siege and was seriously wounded, being captured by the Red Army in 1945. As an injured officer, he was handed over to the new Hungarian government where he served in the new "Democratic" Army until 1950, after which he emigrated to Switzerland. Bozsoki was able to study engineering and worked for the Oerlikon weapons company where he helped develop the COBRA anti-tank missile. He died in 2009.

Ensign János Bozsoki is a veteran 43M Zrínyi II assault howitzer with the command vehicle upgrade. He may be taken as the command tank in any Hungarian armoured platoon, or as a tank in a reinforced platoon.

ENSIGN JÁNOS BOZSOKI'S 43M ZRÍNYI II ASSAULT HOWITZER

Cost	300pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 forward-facing hull-mounted medium howitzer and one crew-carried MMG with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage Value	9+ (medium tank)
Special Rules	- Ambush Tactics: Any Zrínyi II in the same force as Ensign Bozsoki (including his own) may set up after all units have deployed, but before the game begins. This must be within the Hungarian deployment zone for that scenario. Any Zrínyi II set up in appropriate terrain will benefit from the hidden set up rules (see page 131 of the <i>Bolt Action</i> rulebook) and may also begin the game in Ambush. - Gold Medal for Bravery: Ensign Bozsoki is Stubborn. See page 95 of the <i>Bolt Action</i> Rulebook. - Command Vehicle (see here of <i>Tank War</i>)



Ensign János Bozsoki skillfully deploys his Zrínyi II assault guns in ambush

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play on further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by checking which side holds the objectives. If the Soviet player controls 2 or more of the objectives, the Hungarian defensive line is compromised and it is a Soviet victory. If both sides hold one objective the game is a draw. Any other result is a Hungarian victory. To control the objective there must be one of your own units within 3" and no enemy units within 3". Vehicles may claim the objective but not empty transport vehicles.



German infantry street fighting by Ramiro Bujeiro © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Weapon 21: MG34 and MG42 Machine Guns

AFTERMATH

The Soviet and Romanian assault on the Sósfürdő would turn out to be the climax of the battle for the city of Tordá, the largest fought in Transylvania during the Second World War. At this critical moment the inspired leadership of a Hungarian junior officer, Ensign János Bozsoki, helped tip the balance and stop a Red Army breakthrough. He expertly sighted his battery of six Zrínyi II assault howitzers and in the ensuing ambush they knocked out 18 Soviet T-34 tanks, crippling the assault. East of the city the Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division attacked with 57 tanks to try and push back the Romanians and Soviets in that sector but were bloodily repulsed. The Hungarian forces had lost over 1,000 men on this day alone. However, despite this bravery, the Hungarians knew they could no longer hope to hold the city against the overwhelming numbers the Soviets could throw at them.

On 23 September, the day after the battle in the Salt Baths, the German 23rd Panzer Division arrived in the area to relieve the exhausted Hungarians. The *Panzertruppe* attacked immediately at dawn with about 65 Panthers and Panzer IV's supported by their Panzergrenadiers. The German troops were able to stabilize the situation but further advances were called off by their commander, Lieutenant General Josef Maria von Radowitz, as their attack brought them into range of direct firing Soviet artillery batteries which killed or wounded over a third of their infantry.

With their direct assault on Tordá stalled, the Soviet and Romanian forces concentrated their next attacks on the city's mountainous flanks. By 30 September the Romanian 18th Division had broken through and cut off the road north back to Kolozsvár, the city Marshal Malinovsky had as his objective for this operation. Soviet tank forces then shifted their focus to the southeast front of Tordá and their repeated attacks meant by 4 October the front had been pushed back so far, the city was almost encircled. With the line of retreat back to Hungary about to be cut, General Lajos Veress gave the order for the Hungarian 2nd Army to begin withdrawing from the city. To escape the Soviet pincers, Veress ordered only a small defensive detachment to remain on the southern edge of Tordá while the rest of the 2nd Army concentrated in the north to fight

their way out. The Hungarians broke out but the holding force of the 1st Infantry Regiment suffered 70% losses while fighting their delaying action.

Although the battle of Tordá ended in a retreat, the Hungarians had managed to hold off 11 Soviet and Romanian infantry divisions, as well as a Guards Tank and Mechanized Corps for almost a month. This prevented the retreating German *Army Group South Ukraine* from being encircled and destroyed. In this respect, the Tordá battle was one of the most successful operations of the war for the Royal Hungarian army.



Hungarian tank ace Ervin Tarczay leads the Panthers of the 2nd Armoured Division

COUNTER-ATTACK AT DEBRECEN



General Lajos Veress, despite being a native of Transylvania, ordered the Hungarian 2nd Army to evacuate his home region on 10 October, due to the overwhelming enemy superiority. Kolozsvár, the historic capital of the region, was abandoned to avoid its destruction. The Hungarians pulled out of southern Transylvania as German *Generaloberst* Johannes Friessner's Army Group South Ukraine was completing its panicked retreat out of Romania over the eastern Transylvanian mountains and into the Great Hungarian Plain near the city of Debrecen. This was Hungary's third largest city and an important rail hub. More important than the city itself was the nearby crossing point of the Tisza River at Polgár. The retreating Axis forces desperately needed to establish a continuous defensive line and the Tisza River offered a defensible natural barrier to do so once the Axis forces could fall back behind it.

Friessner's Army Group South Ukraine was made up of the weakened 8th Army commanded by Otto Wöhler, retreating from the north out of the Ukraine and consisted of mostly infantry divisions, and the recently formed *Armeegruppe Fretter-Pico* – with the 6th Army as its core. This army group was a mixed bag of German and Hungarian units, with the 2nd Hungarian Army, the III Panzer Corps (parts of three Panzer Divisions, the 1st, 23rd, and 13th and Panzergrenadier division *Feldherrnhalle*), and the 8th SS Cavalry Division all coming under General Maximilian Fritter-Pico's command.

Facing these Axis forces was once again the 2nd Ukrainian Front, commanded by Marshal Malinovsky and consisting of four infantry armies (27th, 53rd, 40th, and 7th Guards), the 1st and 4th Romanian armies, the 6th Guards Tank Army, and two combined mechanized cavalry groups commanded by Generals S.I. Gorshkov and I.A. Pliyev. In all, Malinovsky had 42 Soviet rifle divisions, 22 Romanian divisions, 750 tanks and assault guns, and 1,100 aircraft at his disposal. Soviet war plans for the invasion of *Magyar* lands dated back to 1940, but had not been updated until August 1944 when the Soviet general staff began to map out a detailed strategy for knocking Hungary out of the war and seizing the resources and land of the Danube Basin. The advance of the Red Army had been stalled, as the remnants of *Army Group South Ukraine* and several newly raised Hungarian divisions had put up a fierce resistance in the Carpathian chain, stopping the Soviets for a month. Having finally broken through Transylvania and into the open plains beyond, the Red Army launched these forces into what they called the *Debrecen Offensive Operation* on 6 October

to regain their momentum. The objective of these powerful Red Army mechanised forces was to capture Debrecen and the Tisza River crossings. This would have a good chance of encircling and destroying the German forces of Army Group South Ukraine. The open plains of the Hungarian *Puszta* (meaning, literally, plains), where the next three weeks of fighting would take place, looked deceptively like the perfect terrain for these two mechanised forces to wage war over, but the road network was poor and many of the 'fields' were actually flooded bogs on closer inspection.



Hungarian Border Guards patrol a mountain pass in the Carpathians

OPERATION *DEBRECEN*

Fearing being encircled, General Johannes Friessner flew to Hitler's headquarters to personally ask permission to withdraw behind the Tisza River before the Red Army spearheads arrived, and to have freedom of movement to counter the Soviet attacks as they developed. The Führer surprised him by not only flat out refusing these two requests, but pledging him additional divisions so Friessner could launch his own offensive to destroy Malinovsky's 6th Guards Tank Army. Hitler issued new orders to *Armeegruppe Fretter-Pico* to carry out an offensive. This was an audacious plan to cut off and destroy the spearheads of the Soviet mechanised forces, and then retake the mountain passes in the Transylvanian Alps, thus cutting off the Soviet lines of communication and setting up defensible positions for the winter.

A critical situation was developing with both Malinovsky and Fretter-Pico receiving the order to attack, but both being unaware of the other's intentions. The Soviets beat the Axis forces to the draw and attacked first on 6 October. Cavalry Group Pliyev advanced 50 kilometres through Hungarian units but the 6th Guards Tank Army only managed 10 kilometres as they ran headlong into 1st and 23rd Panzer Divisions just as they were making final preparations to advance themselves. By 10 October Malinovsky's troops occupied several bridgeheads on the western bank of the Tisza, only 70 kilometres from Budapest. Held by the 2nd and 4th Romanian Divisions, General Fretter-Pico swiftly deployed a formidable force to dislodge them. The Hungarian 1st Cavalry and 1st Infantry divisions attacked the Romanians frontally while the King Tigers of the 503rd Heavy Panzer Battalion and 4th SS *Panzergranadiers* caved in their flank. The Romanians were cut off from the Tisza river and eventually forced to surrender on 20 October.

Generalmajor Günther Pape's *Feldherrnhalle* Panzer Grenadier Division was also ordered to take up positions in front of the Polgár crossing and keep it open. Seeing these developments, Malinovsky shifted his forces north of Debrecen and ordered Group Pliyev to drive toward the city and threaten the Tisza river crossings. In their haste reaching the outskirts of Debrecen on 11 October, elements of Pliyev's Guard Cavalry Corps were actually cut off and

only thanks to the weakness of the local German forces were they able to fight their way out of this encirclement. Catching up to Group Pliyev, the Romanian 2nd Division and 3rd Mountain Division joined the Soviet cavalymen and took the city of Debrecen on 20 October in bloody street fighting against the Hungarian 16th Assault Gun Battalion and elements of 23rd Panzer Division.

COUP IN BUDAPEST

With the military situation for Hungary looking grim, the country's Regent, Admiral Horthy, had already begun making secret negotiations for a separate peace with the Soviet Union. Stalin was harsh with the desperate Hungarian leader and the terms required the Hungarians to immediately turn their arms on their German allies and join the war on the Soviet side. On the fateful morning of 15 October Horthy received these Soviet peace terms and dared to take action, at midday announcing that the war was over by radio to the people of his nation and that the alliance with Nazi Germany was broken. Before he had finished reading out the final sentence in his address the Germans launched *Operation Panzerfaust*, a raid led by SS commando Otto Skorzeny to take control of the Hungarian seat of government. Hitler was determined to hold onto his last remaining ally and, most importantly, his last source of crude oil.

By 16 October the matter had been settled once and for all, with German troops taking over the government district on Castle Hill in Budapest and installing Ferenc Szálasi, head of the pro-German Arrow Cross fascist party, as the country's new leader. Despite this swift action by the Germans, the *Honvédség* was thrown into chaos by Horthy's announcement. Hungarian command posts at all fronts were overwhelmed by contradictory messages, and some Hungarian units led by their officers went over to the Soviets. The Soviet planners had hoped for the full-scale disintegration of the *Honvédség*, but this did not happen and the three Hungarian field armies stood firm, shoulder to shoulder with their German allies. Malinovsky reported back to the *Stavka* that the Hungarians were continuing to fight. The reaction from Stalin was swift and brutal, with a special directive being issued to both the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian Fronts:

"In view of the fact that the Hungarian forces have not ceased hostilities against our forces and are continuing to maintain a common front with the Germans, the Stavka of the Supreme Command orders that on the field of battle you must act toward the Hungarian troops just as you would toward the German ones, without differentiating between them, you must inform all of the troops at the front of this."

Even with the failure of the Hungarians to switch sides as expected, Malinovsky's confidence grew with the capture of Debrecen. He once again ordered General Pliyev's Mechanised Cavalry to attack and push on, this time to take Nyiregyhaza. Having narrowly escaped disaster just days before Pliyev obeyed and captured the city on 22 October, cutting off Wöhler's 8th Army but disregarding his flank protection. Fretter-Pico intended to pull back westward and form a solid line to meet the Soviets, but his chief of staff General Helmuth Grolman had other plans. He saw an opportunity to not only blunt the Soviet armoured advance, but to cut off and destroy a large part of the Russian spearhead. Grolman's plan called for the daring and drive of the early Blitzkrieg campaigns of 1940. Instead of a full retreat, *Armeegruppe Fretter-Pico* would split in two and counter attack in two directions. Wöhler's infantry would strike west at the Red Army units between Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza, and the Panzers of 23rd Panzer Division, 13th Panzer Division, and Panzergrenadier Division *Feldherrnhalle* would attack eastward to link up with Wöhler's men. On the 23rd of October Fretter-Pico's forces began their attacks. General Josef Maria von Radowitz's 23rd Panzer Division sliced through the Soviet infantry divisions trying to secure Pliyev's left flank, with the *Feldherrnhalle* panzergrenadiers forming a buffer to prevent any breakout attempts by the Soviets. The *Gebirgsjäger* of Wöhler's 3rd Mountain Infantry Division would march 125km in 52 hours, fighting through any Soviet resistance they met and linking up with the 23rd Panzer Division on 24 October. Along with the 8th SS Cavalry Division 'Florian Geyer' and the Hungarian IX Corps they would form a ring of steel around Pliyev's Red Army cavalrymen.



Feldherrnhalle Panzergrenadiers

TOP SECRET

OPERATION *PANZERFAUST*

At 08:30 on 15 October, a pleasant autumn morning in Budapest, SS Fallschirmjäger in civilian dress kidnapped the Hungarian leader's son, Miklos Horthy Jr. Led by the infamous *SS Sturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny, this smaller operation, *Mickey Maus*, was part of the larger Operation *Panzerfaust*, a raid on the Hungarian capital to keep them from departing from the Axis. The 76-year old Regent Miklos Horthy had been seeking a separate peace with the Soviet Union for months as he believed that the war was lost. He addressed his nation at 11:00 that day to declare Hungary's intention to exit the war, that the Wehrmacht must leave the country, and asked for an armistice with the Soviets. He wanted to save his country from being destroyed and plundered by both the Soviets and Germans as they fought to achieve their respective goals while caring little for the Hungarians themselves. He had not even finished reading the final sentence in the address before German SS *Fallschirmjäger* commandos and King Tigers of *Schwere Panzerabteilung 503* had seized the Royal palace and taken over the government buildings. Chaos and confusion reigned in the ranks of the Royal Hungarian Army, but most officers were outraged that they were being asked to deal with the loathed Soviets and did not turn on their German allies. The elderly regent was blackmailed by Skorzeny, who held his only surviving son 'Mickey' in captivity. Horthy was forced to resign and taken into captivity in Hirschberg am Haarsee castle in Bavaria. His son was never released and held in Dachau concentration camp until liberated at the war's end. The Germans installed the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross Party leader, Ferenc Szálasi, as the new leader of the country. Heinz Guderian also issued an order that all of Hungary was now a combat zone and Hungarian units would come under German command. Horthy's naive plan failed less than 12 hours after it began and, as a consequence, his country suffered another 8 months of total war.



An Aufklärungs platoon of 13th Panzer Division deploys for a fight

SCENARIO 3: OPERATION *DEBRECEN*

Fretter-Pico sent the 23rd Panzer Division and Panzergrenadier Division *Feldherrnhalle* into the fray to help cut off and destroy Guards Cavalry Group Pliyev. As both sides threw more reinforcements into the area, the battle became more confused, with neither side knowing who had really surrounded whom. The Soviet 4th Guards broke through the 23rd Panzer Division's positions while at the same time, the 4th Guards' rear elements were desperately fighting the *Feldherrnhalle* Division, trying to prevent the entire Corps from being encircled. This is what war on the Eastern Front was all about – manoeuvre, attack, counter-attack, and encirclement.

FORCES

This scenario uses the *Tank Wars* rules and armoured platoon structure. The Soviet armoured platoon is chosen from the *Guards Mechanised Brigade* Theatre Selector [here](#), with the exception that only Sherman tanks equipped with the 75mm gun are available, as the 76mm variants were not available until November 1944. The German reinforced platoon is chosen from the *1944–45 Panzergrenadiers*, *Panzer Kampfgruppe*, *Panzer Reconnaissance*, or *Hungarian Armoured Field Division* Theatre Selectors [here](#).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery should mostly be open plain, with some small streams and a network of dirt roads crisscrossing the table with a stone bridge in the middle. Also include some scattered patches of swamp and lightly wooded areas. A single objective marker is placed in the centre of the table.

DEPLOYMENT

The Soviet player sets up at least half his units (rounding up) within 12" of the centre of the board, with any unit not deployed being placed in reserve, arriving from the short table edge of the Soviet players choice. Note all the Soviet reserves must come on from the same short table edge once chosen and will use the normal *Reserves* rules. The German player now deploys at least three units, and up to half (rounding up) his units anywhere on the table that is at least 18"

from any deployed Soviet units. The rest of the German force will form a flanking force which enters the table in a special way described below.



German Gebirgsjäger LMG team

SPECIAL RULES

WHO'S OUTFLANKING WHO...

Debrecen was described as one of the wildest tank battles of the war, with both sides manoeuvring to flank each other constantly. Whichever player controls the central objective marker, representing control of the road network, at the beginning of turn 3 chooses which table edge the German flanking force will enter the table from on that turn. The units in the flanking force arrive automatically without an order test but must be given a *Run* or *Advance* order. They may choose to arrive from any point along that table edge chosen by the player holding the central objective. To hold the objective a player must have one of his vehicles with at least 7+ armour, or an infantry or artillery unit within 6" of it and no enemy units of these types also within the same distance of it. If at the beginning of turn 3 neither player holds the objective, the Axis flanking force must enter from a randomised table edge. To determine the table edge, the Axis player rolls an order die and whichever direction the arrow above the order points is the edge the force arrives on.

OBJECTIVE

The Germans are attempting to cut off and destroy the Red Army mechanized spearhead. The encircled Soviets are trying to fight their way out of this trap as well as flank the Germans themselves.



German Wespe Self-propelled Artillery

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. Both sides initial starting forces are already on the table so start pulling order dice! Remember the Soviet reserves will arrive from turn 2 using the normal reserve rolls and the Axis flanking force will arrive on turn 3 along the table edge chosen by whoever controls the central objective.

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.



Scenario 3: Operation *Debrecen*

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed, and three victory points for holding the controlling the central objective. To hold the objective a player must have one of his vehicles with at least 7+ armour, infantry, or artillery units within 6" of it and no enemy units of these types also within that same distance of it.



Soviet Sniper Team

AFTERMATH

Group Pliyev did not escape this second time from the German ring of steel. On 25 October Malinovsky sent his 27th Army in an all-out assault to rescue Group Pliyev, but this was smashed by the 23rd Panzer Division's panzer grenadier regiment 128 who were waiting in reserve. The trapped Soviets threw themselves at the Axis lines looking for a way out but were met by withering fire from artillery, anti-tank, and assault guns. The *Gebirgsjäger* of 3rd Mountain Division made life hell for the Soviet officers and NCO's as their ranks contained a number of the German's most talented snipers, men like Leopold Meirer with over 180 kills. By 29 October it was clear the trapped Red Army cavalrymen could not break out, and all surviving units were ordered to destroy their vehicles and heavy weapons and attempt to reach Soviet lines by any means necessary. The estimated casualties for group Pliyev were 6,255 killed, 6,662 prisoners and the loss of 358 tanks and 900 guns. The three weeks of chaotic tank battles and fighting in the city of Debrecen itself resulted in what could be seen as a tactical German victory, but a strategic victory for the Soviets.

The Germans had successfully held the Tisza river crossing at Polgár, allowing the weary infantrymen of Wöhler's 8th Army to withdraw behind the river and avoid being cut off and destroyed by the Red Army tanks. Indeed, the Germans had managed to establish a solid defensive line for the first time since the Red Army entered Hungary. The Axis counter attacks around Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza contained what would have been a swift thrust to capture Budapest itself, opening up the southern approaches to the Reich. Blunting the 2nd Ukrainian Front's attack came at a high cost for *Armeegruppe* Fretter-Pico, with only 8,450 men left fit for combat out of four Panzer Divisions (1st, 3rd, 13th, and 23rd), 2 Panzer Grenadier Divisions (4th SS and *Feldherrnhalle*), and the 76th Infantry Division. Only 67 tanks and 58 assault guns were left of the 400 that began the operation.

The Soviets had been prevented from quickly overrunning eastern Hungary and taking Budapest swiftly as they had planned. This task was given to Marshal Malinovsky by Stalin, who expected him to capture Budapest by the end of October and open the road to Vienna, would in fact take him an additional

three and a half months to achieve. However, the tank battle at Debrecen had drawn the German Panzer Divisions away from defending the approaches to Budapest and the next Red Army offensive saw them capture Nyiregyhaza on 30 October, occupying the eastern third of Hungary and arriving at the outer suburbs of Budapest on 7 November.



A Panzer Kampfgruppe forms up to attack at Debrecen



ENCIRCLEMENT

By early October the Red Army's summer offensive, Operation *Bagration*, had finally lost its momentum and stopped at the river Vistula. The *Stavka* began to assess the options for the next phase of the drive into the doomed Thousand Year Reich. The most direct route to Berlin, through Poland, would be bloody as the Germans had considerable panzer formations in reserve, stationed behind the front on the road to the capital. It was decided to try and draw these powerful reserves away by applying pressure on the flanks; East Prussia and Courland in the north and Hungary in the south. With the advance into eastern Hungary now complete, the situation for Budapest was looking grim with no less than three Soviet Army Fronts advancing on the glittering Magyar capital simultaneously from different directions.

At 09:00 on 18 October, Stalin ordered Marshal Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian Front to turn north from its conquest of the Balkans and enter the Hungarian plain as the southern pincer. The failure of Horthy to convince the *Honvédség* to switch sides meant that the 3rd Ukrainian Front was needed to support Malinovsky's 2nd Ukrainian Front, which had been badly bloodied and exhausted in the fighting around Debrecen and was now approaching Budapest from the east across the Hungarian plain. In the north the 4th Ukrainian Front was battering itself upon the Dukla Pass defences in the Carpathian Mountains and was completely bogged down.



Hungarian Hetzers prepare to defend Pest

A PHONE CALL WITH STALIN

Stalin ordered the attack on Budapest shortly before midnight on 28 October 1944. When Headquarters of the 2nd Ukrainian front received the order to go over to the offensive on 29 October, they were stunned at being asked to unleash a powerful offensive straight after the bloody battles at Debrecen. The *Stavka* hoped the 2nd and 3rd Fronts would advance at high speed from the East and South, capturing Budapest by 30 November and Vienna by 30 December. It was expected that the capture of the Hungarian capital would deal a significant blow to the morale of Axis forces as well as an economic one, with over 900 factories located within the city limits. Budapest was also a vital logistical objective, with seven major highways and eleven rail lines running through it. Taking Vienna would be almost impossible without taking Budapest first, a fact the Führer was well aware of. If these objectives could be achieved that would leave the southern wing of the Red Army standing on the doorstep of Bavaria and Czechoslovakia. Such a powerful onslaught was predicted by the Soviet General Staff to distract Hitler's attention and force him to move his main armoured reserves south, leaving the way to Berlin open to the waiting Soviet armies in the east.

Stalin believed the offensive needed to be immediate to forestall the regrouping of the German Panzer Divisions already in Transdanubia, and take advantage of the current weak enemy defences in front of 2nd Ukrainian Front and the apparent low morale of the Hungarian Army. The situation on the ground for Malinovsky would make this almost impossible to achieve. His men were exhausted, the success at Debrecen having cost them 19,713 killed and 64,297 wounded, with no replacements being sent as the southern front was not the priority. Most of his Front's armour was in tatters, with replacement vehicle numbers being woefully inadequate, 300 tanks and self-propelled guns were being sent to replace 1,229 that had been lost. His supply lines were also overstretched. Difficulties with the Romanian rail gauge meant the Red Army's supplies were being brought in over the Carpathians in long columns of trucks moving day and night on narrow and muddy roads. With such limited forces to launch their offensive with, it made the 2nd Ukrainian Front's moves

predictable to the German commanders. Stalin decided to pick up the phone and call Malinovsky directly, and in an infamous and heated phone call the two men wrestled with their two different realities:

Malinovsky: *If you give me, as of now, five days as an absolute maximum, Budapest will be taken. If we go over to the offensive without delay, then the 46th Army, for sheer lack of forces, will not be able to develop its blow quickly, it will inevitably get bogged down in heavy fighting at the very approaches to the Hungarian capital. Putting it briefly, it cannot seize Budapest off the march.*

Stalin: *You are arguing all to no purpose. You don't understand the political necessity of mounting an immediate attack on Budapest.*

Malinovsky: *I understand all the political importance of taking Budapest and for that very reason I am asking for five days...*

Stalin: *I categorically order you to go over to the offensive for Budapest tomorrow.*

Stalin hung up, and a few minutes later the telephone rang again. This time it was Deputy Chief of Staff of the General Staff Antonov, asking for the precise time the 2nd Ukrainian Front would attack, in order to inform Stalin. Although it seems out of touch, Stalin's decision to ignore Malinovsky's protests was probably the correct one, as if the offensive had been postponed until 3 November then the attack would have faced a continuous Axis defence line and an additional six newly arrived German mobile divisions.



Soviet anti-tank rifle team

OPERATION *BUDAPEST*

The 2nd Ukrainian Front was forced to begin its next offensive under much less favourable conditions than its previous one at Debrecen, with the Axis frontline being half as long and their Panzer reserves regrouped and able to concentrate where needed. The Berlin axis of advance was given the full priority for flow of Soviet reserves and replacements. Malinovsky's men would have to make do with what they had and the bloody experience they had recently gained.

The Soviet offensive, Operation *Budapest*, began at 14:30 on 29 October along a 95km stretch of front. The reconnaissance companies ranged ahead of the main force at full speed in their Soviet BA-64s and US Lend-Lease M3 Scout cars. The tanks of 2nd and 4th Guards Mechanised Corps then roared into life and ground forwards as overhead the Sturmoviks of the 3rd Guards Assault Air Corps provided close air support, attacking Axis previously identified communications and strongholds. The preceding artillery bombardment had been brief, only 30 minutes, but it was intensive. Behind all this, hundreds of slower vehicles – IS2's and Studebaker trucks full of infantry moved forward in support. The Marshal's farewell words to the commanders of the 2nd and 4th Guards Mechanised Corps had been prophetic:

The fighting is expected to be hard. The Nazis know they are doomed and they will fight like condemned men.

Having left its jump off point at the city of Szeged, the Red Army steamroller crushed the initial defence lines manned mostly by recently raised Hungarian reserve infantry divisions. Some Magyar warriors fought to the death rather than surrender, like the 1/15 Artillery Battery, which was destroyed in hand-to-hand fighting. However, these acts of bravery were not enough to stop the Soviet tanks from pushing north east along the road to Budapest.

Now it was clear that Malinovsky would concentrate his efforts in the Szeged-Kecskemét area, Army Group South commander, General Friessner, ordered all his mobile formations to immediately redeploy back towards the Hungarian capital. This newly formed *Armeegruppe Fretter-Pico* consisted of three Panzer Corps. The 1st and 24th Panzer Divisions made up LVII Panzer Corps,

Feldherrnhalle and 13th Panzer-Division made up III Panzer Corps, and 4th SS Police Panzer Grenadier and 23rd Panzer Division made up IV Panzer Corps. Attached to this was the 3rd Hungarian Army which included the elite 1st Armoured Division and 1st Hussar Division. The decision to re-deploy these powerful mobile forces would prove to be one the most important moves made by the Axis commanders during the battle of Budapest. This army group did have a major weakness which resulted in a very odd order of battle, its extreme lack of infantry meant the panzer to infantry division ratio was almost 1:1. Throughout the coming battles the Axis troops would be mobile, but severely lacking in any ability to hold ground or prevent Soviet infantry infiltrating gaps in their lines.



German Army Panzerschreck Team

FORTRESS KECSKEMÉT

The nature of the terrain and weather at this time of year in the Danube basin meant the Soviet tank armies were restricted to moving mostly along the roads, with the fields either side posing a large risk of bogging down any vehicles attempting to cross them. Knowing this, Friessner's plan to beat back the Soviet offensive was simple. Fortify every town and settlement along the approach roads to Budapest and then use his mobile formations to perform 'hit and run' attacks on the exposed flanks of the advancing Soviet columns. He did not have the infantry to hold ground, so controlling territory was not possible, the aim was to slow the enemy down. Malinovsky had been tricked before by these tactics at Debrecen, so he intended to counter this by approaching each strong point with two armoured wedges, so as not to expose his flanks.

Kecskemét was perhaps the most important of these towns as it was the gateway to Budapest, having the only asphalt road running through it to the capital. Knowing this, the Hungarians transformed the town into a fortified stronghold. The rapid advance of Soviet 2nd and 4th Guards Mechanised Corps had meant it was surrounded on three sides on the first day of the battle, but until it was cleared of the enemy the Red Army lines of communication & supply were not secure for the capture of Budapest. This once bustling market town sitting between the Tisza and Danube rivers would now become the focus of the entire campaign in South East Europe.

SCENARIO 4: FLAK REGIMENT 133

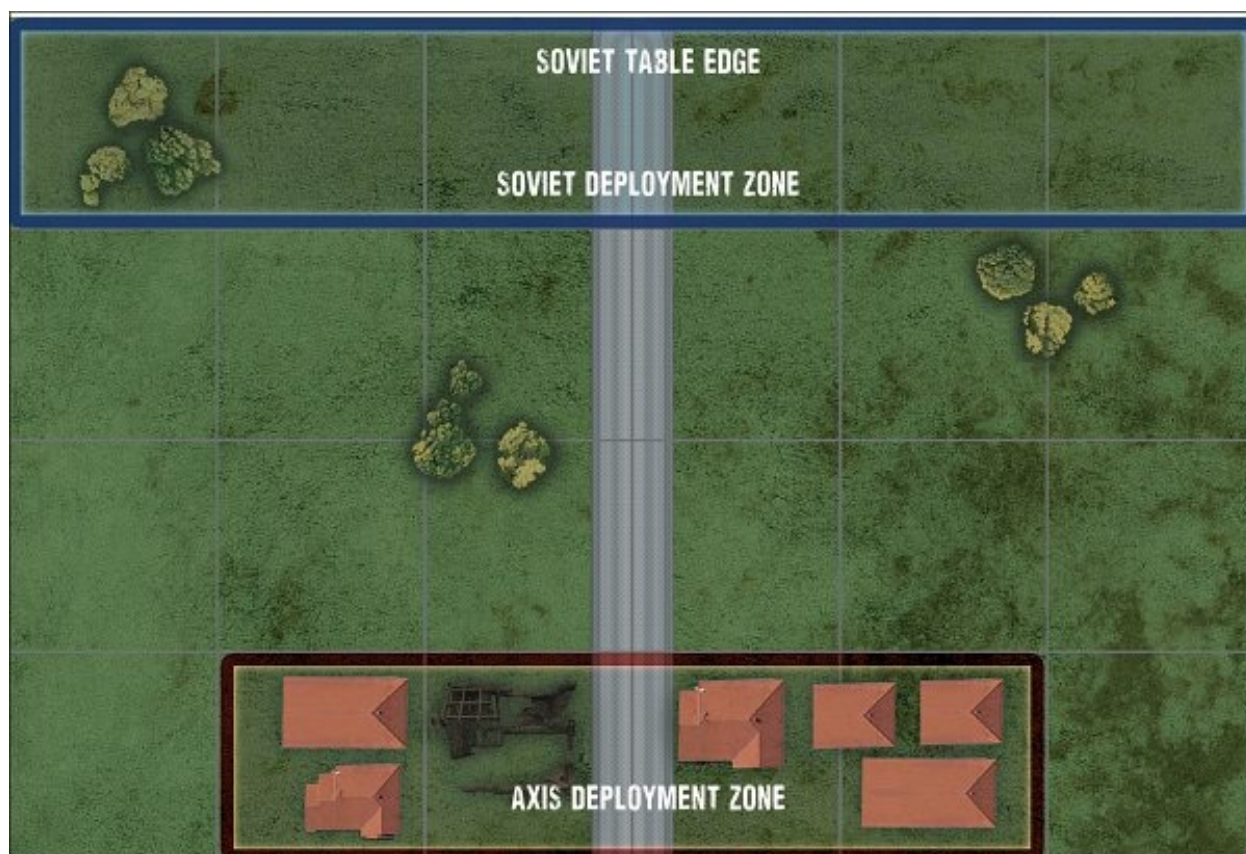
Soviet reconnaissance patrols of the 6th Guards Mechanised Brigade had failed to discover that the town had been turned into a fortress, defended by trenches and heavy weapon emplacements. Red Army intelligence believed the town was garrisoned by infantry units falling back from the initial onslaught. It was, in fact, held by *Luftwaffen Flak-Regiment 133*, alongside some stragglers from the 8th Hungarian Reserve Division, engineers, and a battery of the 7th Hungarian Assault Gun Battalion equipped with the German StuG III G.

A small *Kampfgruppe* was also formed from the staff of Panzer-Artillery Regiment 89 and some of its batteries, survivors from I battalion Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 26, and Panzer-Pionier Battalion 40. These units defended Kecskemét under the command of Colonel Karl Alfred Harald Freiherr von Uslar-Gleichen.

What the defenders of Kecskemét lacked in numbers they made up for in firepower. The Flak gunners possessed 36 heavy 88mm guns and 120 20mm light anti-aircraft guns. The open terrain surrounding the town also provided excellent fields of fire. Despite panic within the town's population and over 300 Soviet POWs to keep under control, the Flak Regiment commander, 41-year old Lieutenant-Colonel Hortian, prepared his men to make a stand. The attack of the armoured spearheads of 4th and 6th Guards Mechanised Brigades was launched at dawn on 30 October and was meant to take Kecskemét with a swift charge. The Luftwaffe gunners met the Red Army tanks with a hail of shells.

FORCES

The Soviet player has a 25% point advantage over the Axis player (e.g. 1,000pts versus 1,250pts). The Soviet player's armoured platoon is chosen from the *Guards Mechanised Brigade* selector [here](#). The German reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Heavy Anti-aircraft Battery* selector of this book. In addition, the German player receives a regular Forward Air Observer with one extra man for free. This unit has additional special rules below.



Scenario 4: Flak Regiment 133

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery is setup to show the outskirts of Kecskemét and the highway that runs through the town and on to Budapest. The surrounding fields should not have much cover, a few groups of light woods and some bushes will be enough. The edge of the town itself is depicted on the Axis players table edge with some buildings and yards as shown on the map. The highway runs directly from the Soviet players long table edge through the middle of the Axis deployment zone. A single objective marker is now placed on the highway, 6" onto the table from the Axis players table edge.

DEPLOYMENT

To represent the Soviet forces being unaware of the Axis defences around the town, the Soviet player must deploy first, setting up at least half of their units onto the table up to 12" from the Soviet table edge. Any units not deployed can be held in reserve. Once the Soviet player has set up their initial forces the Axis

player then deploys all their units. The Axis player's deployment zone is 12" onto the table from their long table edge and not within 12" of either short table edge. While doing so, each unit may also take either a 6" trench section (if an infantry unit) or a gun pit (if an artillery unit or infantry support weapon). These fortifications are deployed with the unit as they set up. All Axis units may choose to begin the game with an Ambush order.

SPECIAL RULES

HIDDEN SETUP

The units of the initial Axis force benefit from the Hidden rule (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) if they are set up in cover.

FAMOUS AIR SUPPORT

The *Luftwaffe* defenders on the ground were given direct support from their comrades in the air. In particular, the Third Reich's most decorated pilot, *Oberstleutnant* Hans-Ulrich Rudel with his *Schlachtgeschwader 2 "Immelmann"*. He flew many sorties that day over Kecskemét in his Ju 87G2, using his tank busting 37mm cannon to deadly effect. If the Axis player chooses an Air Observer in his army list than this unit will ignore the *rookie pilot* roll on the chart, treating it as a *Skies are Clear* result instead. Also, the type of plane that turns up, once a successful roll is made, is automatically the *Ground-attack Aircraft*, no roll is needed.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviet player must clear the town of Axis defenders and open up the highway to Budapest. The Axis player must delay the Soviets as long as possible and inflict maximum damage to their armoured fighting vehicles.

FIRST TURN

All order dice are in the bag, begin drawing, and the game commences.

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points

as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Soviet player scores one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed, three points for every friendly unit inside the Axis deployment zone and five victory points for holding the controlling the objective on the road. The Axis player scores three points for every enemy vehicle destroyed with an armour value of 8+ and one victory point for every other enemy unit destroyed. If the objective on the road is held by the Axis player this also grants them five victory points. To control the objective there must be one of your own units within 3" and no enemy units within 3". Vehicles may claim the objective but not empty transport vehicles.



German Wirbelwind Flakpanzer

AFTERMATH

By 09:00 on 30 October the fields in front of Kecskemét were littered with the burning wrecks of 5 Soviet tanks. By the end of the day the defender's 88mm guns had claimed no less than 20 tanks, trucks, and armoured cars, with the famous German ground attack ace Hans Rudel credited with adding a further 7 tanks to that tally. The heavy casualties and fierce resistance was unexpected but it did not break the Red Army tankers, in fact it made them even more resolute to take the town. This is illustrated by the self-sacrifice of Captain V. Doyla from the 23rd Guards Tank Regiment. Even though his T-34 was set on fire, he and his crew continued fighting, rolling their blazing tank right into the German lines and crushing enemy machine gun positions under their tracks. They even managed to break into the town before the tank exploded. Despite these heroics the town remained in Axis hands that day.

BREAKOUT UNDER MOONLIGHT

After the initial armoured assault was bloodily repulsed, the Soviet commander, General Sviridov, planned another frontal assault but this time with a close envelopment using two recently arrived infantry divisions. By the afternoon of 31 October, the Soviet infantry had succeeded in penetrating the Axis defences. The 59th Guards Rifle Division having moved inside the 'fortress' from the south east while 320th Rifle Division reached the town centre from the south western perimeter. The defenders had been abandoned to their fate by Army Group South HQ but had made their own breakout plans. They feared that Soviet infantry would infiltrate their lines that night and destroy the guns as they did not have enough infantry of their own to stop this. Low on ammunition and fuel the Uslar-Gleichen battlegroup, as it had become known, prepared to fight their way out to the north under cover of darkness.

The Soviets suspected this as the 59th Guards Rifle Division had heard detonations throughout the day, a sure sign the Germans were destroying valuables and heavy equipment they could not escape with. Even so, the German breakout was so swift and disciplined it succeeded in catching the Soviets off guard. The trapped Germans and Hungarians moved fast and silently with a ban on any firing, successfully reaching the lines of the 24th Panzer Division by the next morning. After the breakout from Kecskemét, the heroic Lieutenant-Colonel Hortian led the men of Flak Regiment 133 northwest to establish a blocking line near Lajosmizse and help the thinly held positions of 1st Panzer Division. Hortian would receive the Knights Cross in November for his efforts at stalling the Red Army's advance on Budapest at Kecskemét, and the unit was given the honour title of *Flak Sturmregiment*.

CHAOTIC RETREAT

The Germans launched daily counterattacks to reclaim Kecskemét with powerful Panzer *kampfgruppen*, the 24th Panzer Division, Hungarian 1st Armoured Division, and King Tigers of the 503 *Schwere Panzer-Abteilung* all exhausted themselves assaulting Red Army anti-tank guns hidden along the sides of the main road. There was no fixed front line and the battle deteriorated into a chaotic mess. One Hungarian infantry officer from the 8th Reserve Division

described an incredible scene during their retreat from the town. Two strange tanks had suddenly burst onto the road from the left and collided with some Hungarian tanks in his column. Thinking they were German, the Hungarian infantry responded with angry shouts. The hatch of one of these two mysterious tanks opened and a crewman rose up and sprayed the column of trudging Hungarians with a submachine gun! Immediately the quick-thinking Hungarians launched their *panzerfaust* into the hulls and they burst into flames. It had turned out that these were Soviet T-34's trying to knock out the head of the Hungarian column and capture them all! For Malinovsky's tired but determined tankers, their line of supply was now clear, but the way ahead was not. They were about to meet the formidable Attila defence lines on the outskirts of Budapest.



German dismounted Panzer crew

TOP SECRET

THE 'MONK' OF KECSKEMÉT

After its eventual fall, Marshal Malinovsky prepared to visit the war-torn town of Kecskemét in person on 2 November. It was a Thursday, and he had arrived to join the interrogation of a very high-profile prisoner that had just been taken, Hungarian General János Vörös. Disguised as a monk, General Vörös had hidden in the town during the battle and only turned himself in once the battle was over. He was a big catch for the Soviets as he was the former Chief of Staff Army of the Horthy Government. He and his wife had fled to Kecskemét after Horthy was deposed and his government arrested by the Arrow Cross militia.

Eager to see an end to the destruction being wrought on his homeland he was talkative and revealed as much useful information as he could about the Axis defences around Budapest and the troops manning them so as to hasten the Soviet victory. Malinovsky as Front Commander brought with him his chief of Staff, General Zakharov as well as the Front's head of intelligence, General Povekin. Because the Hungarian general had been forced to flee his post in October he was not able to reveal the latest information, but did offer his insights into what the Soviets could expect to come up against when they tried to take Budapest. The side of the city on the eastern bank of the Danube, Pest, was built up into a considerable bridgehead capable of holding 7 divisions of Axis

troops. Some of the defenders included the 22nd and 8th SS divisions. Vörös also warned that the geography of the city itself would pose a challenge to the attackers. The part of the city on the western bank, Buda, was situated on high ground which dominated the whole area of the Pest bridgehead and could only be assaulted by circling around Budapest and taking it from the west. These insights did not change Malinovsky's plans as all the situation reports coming from his frontline commanders were positive that the triumphant Red Army would be entering the city in the next 24 hours.



The 15th Guards Mechanised attempts to overrun the Attila Line in a night attack

THE ATTILA LINE

The Soviet General Staff was well aware that the German command had created strong defensive lines around the Hungarian capital. Three concentric, horseshoe shaped lines named Attila I–III formed formidable fortified rings around the city on the eastern bank of the Danube from north to south. Thousands of civilians and Jewish Labour Battalions had been put to work digging by hand giant anti-tank ditches that were six meters wide and up to ten meters deep. Knowing the Soviet tanks would need to stop and require assistance from engineers to attempt a crossing of these ditches, anti-tank gun positions were sited to cover the defence lines and pick them off while doing so. Guarding the guns were a multitude of bunkers and trenches for the Axis infantry to deal with any Red Army riflemen trying to assist their tanks. Everything possible was done to halt the Soviets here at the Attila line before they reached the Magyar capital. These local defence lines also linked up with large ones thrown up across the north west of the country. The ‘Magrit’ Line ran from the Drava River in the south past the lakes Balaton and Velence, barring the approach to Vienna and protecting the vital oilfields of Nagykanizsa. This in turn linked in the north with the ‘Karola’ Line protecting Upper Hungary.

The Hungarian I/I Parachute Battalion was ordered to leave Buda and take up positions in the Attila Line. The Royal Hungarian Army had been steadily disintegrating since the battles around Kecskemét, with whole companies surrendering rather than fight for a cause they thought was lost. The exception seemed to be the Royal Hungarian Air Force, whose pilots were punishing the Soviet armoured columns on the approach roads to Budapest and the elite infantry of the Parachute Assault battalions who were eager to defend the capital. These tough Magyar warriors were keen to get into the fight as they had been training and combat ready for 3 years since their initial air-drops in Yugoslavia in 1941.

Racing towards the marching paratroopers was the Soviet 4th Guards Mechanised Corps, attempting to reach the Danube River bank on their strict timetable from Malinovsky. The Brigades of this Corps each sported a different animal insignia on their vehicles. The 15th Guards Mechanised, known as the

'Swallow Brigade', was stopped dead in its tracks at the farmstead of Alsó Vany where the Magyar parachute infantry chose to make their first stand. The Hungarians had a battery of 75mm anti-tank guns but, more importantly, a secret new weapon which would be tested for the first time on the front line. The 44m 'Buzogányvető' (mace thrower) was a rocket launcher of native Hungarian design. It featured huge, shaped-charge rounds that were electronically fired from a wheeled carriage. This antitank rocket launcher threw a rocket 3km into the assembling tanks of the 'Swallow Brigade', the round could be followed visually, and resulted in a huge explosion like an artillery round. The weapon had a propaganda name, called the 'Szálasi's Rocket' after the newly imposed fascist leader of the nation, but its effect was very real.

SCENARIO 5: THE ATTILA LINE

The 15th Guards Mechanised 'Deer Brigade' now attempted to use darkness to achieve its goals and break through the anti-tank ditch 3km north at Dunaharaszti, then clear the entire Danube bank. The 4th Mechanised Brigade had strict orders to enter Budapest the next day; 3 November. Surprise was not on their side however, as the sound of gunfire as well as retreating Hungarian riflemen warned the Magyar paratroopers of the approaching Soviet tanks. The I/I Battalion, commanded by Major Edömér Tassonyi, was ready and waiting. Tassonyi's men had reached their position on the Attila Line at the village of Dunaharaszti, only 15km from Budapest, and the Hungarian paratroopers knew they had to hold a 6km frontline by themselves, with reinforcements being at least 2 days behind. One advantage the Hungarians did have was some well organised German artillery batteries in support.

In the late afternoon five T-34's rolled up to the bridge over the anti-tank ditch in front of the Hungarians. In the approaching half-light of dusk the silhouettes of Soviet infantry could be seen advancing, hunched over amongst their tanks. The Hungarian paratroopers stayed calm and held fire, their orders were to wait until the tanks had been fired on by their anti-tank guns before engaging the enemy infantry. There was a deadly pause, with the heavy growling of the Soviet tanks engines being the only sound. Hungarian 80mm heavy anti-aircraft guns then roared to life from their hidden positions in the woods behind the ditch. Combined with the paratroopers launching their *panzerfausts* at close range, all 5 Soviet tanks were knocked out in quick succession by the ambush. This however was just the forward platoon, and at 30 minutes past midnight 20 more T-34's charged the paratroopers positions, with their combat engineers clearing the mines protecting the anti-tank ditch under heavy fire.



Soviet SU-76 self-propelled gun

FORCES

The Soviet players armoured platoon is chosen from the *Guards Mechanised Brigade*, or the *Forward Detachment Reconnaissance Party* Theatre Selector [here](#). In addition, the Soviet player receives a regular T-34/85 for free. The Hungarian reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Generic reinforced platoon* selector, with the only infantry choice being the Parachute Assault section and the only artillery choices being the 75mm Pak 40 anti-tank gun and the 80mm 29/38M Heavy Anti-aircraft gun. The Hungarian player receives Major Tassonyi as part of his forces for free (see [here](#)).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery is setup to show the fortifications of the Attila Line as well as the road through it to Budapest. The main feature is the anti-tank ditch, which is setup on either side of the road running 18" along the centre line. This antitank ditch is impassable to all units in the game. The scenery should be mostly open plain with scattered light woods. A single objective marker is placed on the road, 6" onto the table from the Axis players table edge.

DEPLOYMENT

The Hungarian player sets up all his forces on the table anywhere up to the halfway line, being behind the antitank ditch. As well as setting up his units the Hungarian player also receives two gun-pits and four 6" trench sections that are set up at the same time anywhere in the deployment zone except for across the road. Units occupying them are set up inside them. The Hungarian player also sets up two anti-tank mine fields anywhere on the Soviet side of the table (see

[here](#) for rules for minefields). The Soviet player's forces are all formed into a *first wave*, and will enter the table from turn one.

SPECIAL RULES

AMBUSH

Any Hungarian unit may begin the game in Ambush.

HIDDEN SET UP

The units of the initial Hungarian force benefit from the Hidden rule (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) if they are set up in cover.



Scenario 5: The Attila Line

NIGHT FIGHTING

The Soviet tankers are using the cover of darkness to help them break the Attila Line, so the Night Fighting rules detailed on page 219 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook are used, with the *Flare!* game being the type of scenario, so remember to roll at the beginning of every turn to see if a flare goes up.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviet player must break through the Attila Line, the Hungarians must stop the Soviet tanks at all costs.

FIRST TURN

All order dice are in the bag, begin drawing and the game commences. The Soviet player's forces enter the table on turn one using the *first wave* rules by being given an Advance or Run order. Note that these units do not require an order test to do so.

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Soviet player scores one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed, three points for every friendly unit within 12" of the Hungarian table edge and five victory points for controlling the objective on the road. The Axis player scores two points for every enemy vehicle destroyed with an armour value of 8+ and one victory point for every other enemy unit destroyed. If the objective on the road is held by the Axis player this also grants them five victory points. To control the objective there must be one of your own units within 3" and no enemy units within 3". Vehicles may claim the objective but not empty transport vehicles.

AFTERMATH

The night time tank assault at Dunaharaszti was chaotic and ragged for several hours. Many Soviet tanks were knocked out by the Hungarian guns, and in close quarters by the Hungarian paratroopers with hand-held mines and Panzerfausts. At several places the tanks managed to break through the defence lines, but the Red Army infantry attack collapsed within assault distance when Major Tassonyi employed an extreme tactic. Seeing his position about to be overrun, the Major turned to his German artillery observer and called in fire, the position he gave was their own. He insisted through the protests of the Wehrmacht spotter and 17 seconds later 52 barrels laid down a murderous barrage scoring a direct hit on the Soviet infantry, who desperately tried to dig in as many of their comrades were tossed high into the air. As the barrage slackened, the Magyar paratroopers emerged and proceeded to unearth some of their comrades who had been buried by the blasts. They had known the artillery fire was their own, and luckily only seven men were lost. The drive of the 4th Guards Mechanised Corps, which had covered 110 km in less than 24 hours, had been stopped. Again, Malinovsky's tankers had failed to break through, but it was an almost impossible task as they were fighting with long open flanks and lacked adequate close-air support, heavy artillery, or enough infantry protection.

The fighting, which would last until 22 November, would cost Tassonyi's paratroopers dearly as they sustained 40% casualties holding the line. This first clash on the Attila Line demonstrated its lethal design and allowed German General Fretter-Pico to establish a continuous frontline for the first time since the beginning of the Soviet onslaught that was Operation *Budapest*. The success of the Hungarians defensive action encouraged them to launch a counter-attack at 22:00 the next day. Although supported by German assault guns, they were turned back.



Call the artillery! Major Tassonyi makes his hard decision

TOP SECRET

LEGENDS OF HUNGARY: MAJOR EDÖMÉR TASSONYI

Born on 6 October 1910 in Nagyláz, Hungary, he joined the Royal Hungarian army in 1938, where he was commissioned as a junior Lieutenant in the newly formed Parachute Assault Regiment. He soon gained recognition from his men and superiors for demonstrating outstanding leadership. By October 1944 Major Tassonyi was the commanding officer of the I/I Battalion. He developed a hard fighting and pragmatic reputation while fighting on the Attila Line to defend his nation's capital. His courage under fire and leadership helped his paratroopers hold the front line for 19 days of continuous close combat. One of his most memorable moments came when he called in an artillery bombardment on his own position, which decimated the Soviet infantry assaulting his men. Although controversial, as it cost his unit 7 men killed, the Major explained after the war that his reasoning was he would have lost many more in close combat if the enemy had been allowed to carry through with their assault. His unit suffered 40% casualties in their time on the Attila Line but due to his leadership they not only held the line, but also launched counter attacks of their own. One such attack managed to capture a Soviet Rifle Divisions HQ, in which a document was found asking the Soviet high command for help

as the enemy was “tough as old boots”. The Germans awarded him the Iron Cross First and Second class on 17 & 19 of November as well as a copy of the Wehrmacht report praising the bravery of him and his men. Edömér survived the war but was captured by the Soviets and sent to a labour camp near Odessa. He escaped and fled to Austria before eventually emigrating to Canada, where he died on 4 July 1982.

Cost	275pts (Veteran)
Team	1 Major and 2 men
Weapons	Pistol, rifle, or submachine gun, as depicted on the models.
Special Rules	- Lead from the Front: All Hungarian Parachute Assault Sections within 12” of Major Tassonyi given an order to make an Assault will automatically be treated as having passed the test, with one pin lost as normal. - Zero in On My Position: Once per game Major Tassonyi may call down an artillery strike in exactly the same way as a Forward Artillery observer, however the aiming point must be placed within 12” of the Major himself and cannot be a smoke bombardment.

BREAKTHROUGH AT PESTSZENTIMRE

Having been stopped at Dunaharaszti, part of the 4th Guards Mechanised Corps headed northwest, joined by the 37th Guards Tank Brigade and the 30th Guards Heavy Tank Regiment they formed a 'shock group' under General Sviridov. On the morning of 3 November, the forward detachment swiftly took a bridge over the anti-tank ditch at the village of Gyál, before the German demolition teams could blow it up. The Soviet armoured task force quickly crossed the Attila I Line and fanned out, reaching the suburbs of Pestszentimre. This threatened the left flank of the 22nd SS Cavalry Division 'Maria Theresia' and for a moment there was in fact no Axis troops between Sviridov's tanks and the Hungarian capital.

The only German unit within reach to help was the newly arriving 13th Panzer Division, which was still assembling but would need to attack immediately. Luckily their commander, Generalmajor Gerhard Schmidhuber, was a veteran leader of the *Panzertruppen* and organised his men into a *Panzer Kampfgruppe* to deal with the threat. He split his forces into two battlegroups, one armoured and one non-armoured. The armoured group consisted of Major Gehrig's Panthers of II Battalion/Panzer-Regiment 4 and I Battalion/Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 66 mounted in their half-tracks. These included large numbers of the new SdKfz 251/21 'Drilling' with its triple 20mm autocannons. Major Gehrig's men moved out fast and were able to filter through Pestszentimre and arrive at the outer suburbs before the Soviet 'shock group' entered the town. The town was a home to many of Budapest's factory workers, and so the buildings were a labyrinth of small 'box houses', perfect for the German *Panzertruppen* to unleash a withering fire on 4th Guards Mechanised Corps. 50 German armoured vehicles drove the Red Army spearhead back 3km, but also caused panic when three of the most senior officers of the Soviet units were among the casualties.

SCENARIO 6: COUNTER-ATTACK AT PESTSZENTIMRE

At this critical moment the 4th Guards Mechanised Corp deputy commander, Major-General Baskakov arrived to take control of the wavering Soviet tankers. He quickly assessed the situation and marshalled his forces for a counter-attack. Ordering his artillery to bombard the Germans as they assembled to attack again, Baskakov brought up both the 30th Guards Heavy Tank Regiment and 37th Guards Tank Brigade to form a counter attack of their own. The heavy IS-2 'Joseph Stalin' tanks rumbled off to face the men of 13th Panzer Division.

FORCES

This scenario uses the Tank Wars rules and armoured platoon structure. The Soviet armoured platoon is chosen from the *Soviet Guards Mechanised Brigade* Theatre Selector [here](#). It is encouraged that the IS-2 'Joseph Stalin' is the main type of tank chosen in the compulsory units. The German reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Panzer Kampfgruppe* or *Panzer Reconnaissance* Theatre Selectors [here](#) and [here](#).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. The scenery should mostly be open farmers' fields, with some dirt roads crisscrossing the table. Also include some scattered patches of swamp and lightly wooded areas. The game is played from short table edge to short table edge.

DEPLOYMENT

Both players roll a die, the highest chooses which of the short table edges will be theirs. The German player then sets up all his forces first, as they have been caught assembling for their next attack. All units are deployed within 24" of the centreline towards the German short table edge. The Soviet player's forces are all formed into a *first wave*, and will enter the table at any point along the Soviet players short table edge on turn one, note that these units do not require an order test to do so.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The 4th Guards Mechanised Corps preceded their counter attack with a well-coordinated artillery strike. The Soviet player automatically receives a preliminary bombardment, which comes in without having to roll. See the rules on page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviets have launched their counter attack to drive back the Major Gehrig's Panzer Kampfgruppe, they must clear the enemy from the field. The men of 13th Panzer Division have been hit with an unexpected counter-attack and must fight to survive.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. All Soviet units will enter on turn one as part of a *first wave*.



German King Tiger

GAME DURATION

Keep count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play on further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed. In addition, the German player scores 1 victory point for every Soviet unit within the Soviet half of the table at the end of the game. The Soviet player receives 2 victory points for every one of their units inside the German deployment zone and 3 victory points for every one of their units within 12” of the German players short table edge at the end of the game.



Scenario 6: Counter-attack at Pestszentimre

AFTERMATH

Soviet Major-General Baskakov managed to pull off a well-coordinated and rapid counterstrike at the critical moment on 3 November. The heavy IS-2 tanks turned the tables on the German panzers and the bloody battle raged from 16:00 until midnight. Soviet records claim 30 of the 50 enemy vehicles destroyed or put out of action. These serious losses meant the 13th Panzer had to fall back, leaving behind many dead on the battlefield. The German attack was stopped due to what their reports called 'strong anti-tank defence'.

Disaster fell on another section of the line on 8 November as the rebuilt Pliev Cavalry Corps re-entered the battle after it's mauling at Debrecen. Joined by the 7th Guards Army riflemen it attacked the overstretched Axis defenders along a 50km front near Hatvan, north east of Budapest. This part of the line was held by the 4th and 18th SS Panzergrenadiers, which forcibly recruited ethnic Hungarians, armed with with poor equipment and were demoralised by the continuous Soviet assaults. Unsurprisingly, panic was quick to spread through their ranks as the T-34's literally crushed their comrades seeking refuge in holes in the ground. Friessner and Army Group South command was quick to blame them for the Soviet breakthrough even though some of the officers of these units shot themselves because their soldiers had fled and they would not. The Attila Line had been breached and the Soviet tanks could now swing out and attack the defenders from behind.

With hindsight it is obvious that Malinovsky's objectives for Operation *Budapest* were unrealistic. It appears that his staff officers were unaware of Friessners panzer division reserves rapid redeployment to the approaches to Budapest. The formidable defences of the Attila line were also drastically underestimated if the Soviet planners believed that their forces could advance the 170km and capture a city off the march in just a few days. Some historians have drawn the direct comparison to Operation *Market Garden*, which ended the month before Operation *Budapest*. The plans for both these offensives were similar; to exploit an apparent weak spot in the German line and pour powerful tank formations through it to break through into the Reich itself. Both were also politically motivated, aiming to seize as much territory as possible before other

allied armies arrived. Both were also doomed to failure as these tank formations had to advance up a single road with no opportunity to manoeuvre and needed to capture key bridges for the advance to be successful.



German Army PaK 40 anti-tank gun

ENTER THE 3RD UKRAINIAN FRONT

Stalin encouraged rivalry in his Marshals and it was clear that by the end of November Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian front, coming up from the south-west, would capture large parts of Transdanubia. Apparently unwilling to share the glory, Malinovsky pushed his men even harder from the east, staging two very bloody river crossings of the Danube. The bridgeheads made at Csepel Island and Ersci were paid for in blood by Soviet *Shtrafbat* penal battalions, driven into the Axis machine guns to force the two crossings. 115 men received the Hero of the Soviet Union medal in these battles, almost half the number awarded on Hungarian soil in the war.

These crossings were in a broader perspective unnecessary as Tobulkin's armoured units were advancing 10–20km a day and would have soon advanced past these two crossing points on the Danube. Attacking from the south-west of Budapest, his fresh armoured units punched through the Magrit Line on 20 December at 09:20 after a 40-minute artillery barrage. The 3rd Ukrainian Front possessed five times the infantry as the Axis defenders and three-and-a-half times their tanks. The two Red Army Fronts linked up and closed the ring around the Hungarian capital at the city of Esztergom, which was seized by the 7th Guards Army and 6th Guards Tank Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front who triumphantly linked up with the 18th Tank Corps of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

Soviet tanks fired on the last train packed with refugees leaving Budapest for Vienna, the road was cut. The Hungarian "Leader of the Nation", Ferenc Szálasi, had already fled on 9 December. German Army Group South Commander General Friessner recommended that Budapest be abandoned. In a fit of rage Hitler sacked both him and Fretter-Pico that same day. The Hungarian capital now lay within the vice of two Soviet fronts.



Hungarian forces during the Battle of Budapest by Darko Pavlovic © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Men at Arms 449: The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II.

FESTUNG **BUDAPEST**



It came as an absolute shock to the majority of Budapest's citizens that theirs was now a frontline city. The Soviets had arrived at the eastern edge of the Pest suburbs on 2 November and the thunder of the guns was now constant. This created a surreal situation as civilians walked out of cinema screenings where they had been watching newsreel footage taken from the front they thought was a long way away but could now hear the guns within their own city. The population of the city swelled to almost one million inhabitants over the next six weeks as refugees arrived from the countryside. Yet citizens packed the famous coffee houses such as Cafe Gerbeaud and New York Cafe, and shops remained open while the trams continued to run in the lead up to the subdued Christmas festivities of 1944.

On an earlier visit to the capital, on the eve of the siege, General Friessner observed;

While in Budapest, I realised that the population had no clue about how serious the situation at the front was. Everywhere I was still seeing scenes of the deepest peace and, unfortunately, this poured some bitter drops into the festive cup for the victories at Debrecen.

The only Axis leader who wanted to defend Budapest was Hitler himself. On 23 November he issued his first directive that no house in Budapest would be given up without a fight, regardless of civilian or material damage. This was followed on 1 December with his order number 11, that the city was now declared a fortress, *Festung Budapest*, and would be held at all costs. Unfortunately, words alone did not transform the city into an impregnable fortress. The Führer was determined that no capital city should ever be surrendered unless it was a smouldering pile of ruins. For Hitler, Budapest had become an obsession, as it was a shield to the southern Reich and a source of vital resources. Germany's main source of Bauxite, used for making Aluminium, was in Hungary. The only source of Manganese, a key component in steel and iron manufacture was mined at Úrkút. In fact, most of Hungarian industry, situated in and around Budapest, was harnessed to the needs of the German war machine. Not only that, the Hungarian plain was a rich source of foodstuffs and its importance was well known by the Führer, in 1944 alone some 50,000 tonnes of meat were exported to the Reich. Most important of all was the fact

that the refineries of Nagykanizsa, near Lake Balaton, were Germany's last major source of crude oil.

By late 1944 the Third Reich was starved of fuel and its tanks and aircraft were becoming severely hampered. In the west the daily allowance of gasoline dropped to about 5 tonnes per division, in Italy some Panzer units were receiving only 7 percent or less of their authorised gasoline allocation. The *Luftwaffe* could no longer provide effective air cover due to lack of fuel and even the tactical training of Sepp Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army was cut short before the Ardennes offensive due to lack of fuel. They didn't even have enough fuel to train the new tank drivers. The Reich's railway system had been targeted by Allied bombing raids and been so badly damaged that fuel production was almost completely halted. The coal from the mines could not reach the synthetic oil plants to create the fuel, and any fuel that was manufactured could also not be distributed to the units at the front which needed it. Hungary's oil fields were important as they allowed the *Panzerwaffe* and *Luftwaffe* to operate within the proximity to protect the Reich's southern flank.

Stalin was also fixated on the city of Budapest. The Yalta conference was on the horizon, and the Soviet leader wanted to expand his territorial gains into central Europe before he met with Churchill and Roosevelt. The British were making indications they might try to land forces near Trieste in the Adriatic, and advance up into Austria and Hungary through a so called 'Lublina gap' they thought existed in the Axis defences. Stalin thought this preposterous and wanted to change the facts on the ground by conquering the country and taking Budapest, adding the strategically vital Danube Basin to his own empire.



A Soviet command post in a high rise apartment block

SS IX MOUNTAIN CORPS

The German *Abwehr* intelligence service feared an insurrection from Budapest's population and so Hitler flew in an experienced policeman to command the garrison rather than a purely military man. *Obergruppenführer* Karl Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, was the former commanding officer of the 4th SS *Polizei* Division, but was not however a member of the National Socialist Party and never used the 'Heil Hitler' salute. It was hoped his experience in law enforcement would reduce unrest and desertions in the beleaguered city.

Wildenbruch was given command of the SS IX Mountain Corps, a mixed bag of German and Hungarian troops trapped in the city. This comprised of *Panzergrenadiers* of the *Feldherrnhalle* Division, the remnants of the 13th Panzer Division, the dismounted cavalymen of both the 8th SS 'Florian Geyer' and 22nd 'Maria Theresia' cavalry divisions, and a Luftwaffe Flak Brigade with their much needed '88s'. Also inside the pocket was a battalion sized *Kampfgruppe* from the 271st Volksgrenadier Division. Of the 79,000 defenders, some 37,000 were from Hungarian units, men whose quality ranged from good to poor, with the shattered 10th Infantry Division and recently mobilised 12th Reserve infantry Division bolstered by the veteran 10th Recce Battalion, 1st Armoured Division, and the Assault Artillery of Group Billnitzer. There were also the flying squad battalions raised from various Hungarian militia groups. The Axis defenders faced some 12 divisions of Red Army and Romanian troops numbered close to 110,000 troops on the Pest side and nearly 300,000 men in total when combined with Tobulkin's forces on the western bank of the Danube.

TOP SECRET

GERMAN STRENGTH IN BUDAPEST

The following units and equipment made up the German part of the Budapest garrison under the command of Wildenbruch's IX SS Mountain Corps as of 24 December 1944.

- 8th SS Cavalry Division: 8,000 men, 30 guns, 29 Hetzers and StuGs, 17 anti-tank guns
- 22nd SS Cavalry Division: 11,345 men, 37 guns, 17 Hetzers and StuGs, 14 anti-tank guns
- Panzer Grenadier Division *Feldherrnhalle*: 7,255 men, 38 guns, 24 Panzers and StuGs, 9 anti-tank guns
- 13 Panzer Division: 4,983 men, 35 guns, 17 Panzers and StuGs, 8 anti-tank guns

- 271 st. *Volksgrenadier* Division: 1,000 men, 6 guns, 4 antitank guns
- 1st SS Police Regiment: 700 men,
- 40/1st Flak Battalion.: 500 men, 12 guns
- 12th SS Panzer Police Company: 100 men, 22 Panzers
- 12th Sturm-Flak-Battalion.: 1,000 men, 48 AA guns
- 573rd Flak-Battalion.: 200 men, 12 AA guns
- Europa Battalion: 300 men
- Z.b.V. Battalion 500: 200 men
- Non-combat Troops: 2,500 men
- Field Prisoner Battalion: 12
- Feld Gendarmerie force: 26
- Army Troops (IX SS Mountain Corps.): 1,500 men, 9 guns: 1st Company Landing-Pionier Battalion: 771 men Bridge Construction Battalion: 59 men
- Other *Kampfgruppen*: 1,500 men, 10 anti-tank guns
- Wounded and ill: 1,500 Men
- Total: 42,600 men, 234 guns, 87 Panzers and StuG, 62 antitank guns



8th Waffen-SS Cavalry Division Squad

TOP SECRET

BUDAPEST MILITIAS

With the capital of the nation itself under direct threat, the Hungarians mobilised several special paramilitary units to aide in its defence. Much like the German *Volkssturm*, these units were recruited from the local citizens and were only lightly equipped and lacked training. First was the militia of the Hungarian Arrow Cross fascist party. Although the party leader, Ferenc Szálasi, had already fled the city, as many as 2000 militiamen stayed behind in combat groups including several flying squads equipped with panzerfausts. They were of limited combat value as they directed most of their energy towards harassing civilians and murdering the cities Jewish population, although they would fight to the death if cornered by the Soviets.

More effective was the Royal Vannay Flying Squad Battalion, this grandiose sounding unit was the personal army of Major László Vannay. He had served time in prison for masterminding a right-wing coup in 1932 and was an ardent anti-communist. Vannay was amongst the first to salute Szálasi in

Buda Castle after he took power in the 20 October coup, and received permission to raise his alarm battalion, with 638 men reporting for duty on 22 December. The unit was built from scratch as the enemy closed in on Budapest, with the men recruited from the Association of Veterans of the First World War, and specifically men from the city's municipal workers. The knowledge of the tram and railway operators, Firemen, water works, post office, and other utilities was invaluable in the city fighting, especially their knowledge of the tunnels and sewers of Budapest. Students and boys aged between 15–18 were also recruited and Vannay used an 'uncle system' to team up these younger volunteers with the older men aged between 35–45 who trained them. The unit even organised itself along these lines with two of these 'Uncle & Pup' teams forming the smallest tactical unit, three-a-squad, and nine-a-detachment. Vannay proved a good but draconian leader, he would use loud speakers to announce to the Soviet troops facing his men that they would take no prisoners, meaning his men could now expect no quarter in return. Vannay's men were able to hold off a much larger Red Army force for some seven weeks due to all these factors.

Budapest's university students also formed their own unit of anticommunist fighters. The University Assault Battalion, as it was known, was made up of highly motivated students and led by junior Army officers. Its leader, Lieutenant Gyula Elischer, himself a former student of the Technical University, obtained permission to form the battalion in October. Numbering 500 men it was the only militia group to be adopted into the Royal Hungarian Army's Order of Battle and receive uniforms. Their strong political views made them believe they were choosing the lesser of two evils if their city had to be reduced to ruin rather than be under communist rule.

Finally, there was the Morlin Group, made up of 120 military academy students and many soldiers who had been separated from their units. Led by artillery Captain Imre Morlin, these men had a strong anti-tank capability – being equipped with many panzerfaust launchers and two 75mm Pak 40 anti-tank guns. Desertions from this group were rare, and they often fought to the last bullet. This special unit disintegrated after their leaders capture on 15 January.

Budapest itself posed profound military challenges for the Soviets. The city was once two settlements on opposite banks of the Danube River that grew together over the 1000-year history of the city. Pest, on the east bank, is flat and covered in sprawling but ornate 19th century apartment buildings stretching out from the Danube to where the Hungarian plain begins. Invaders from the east had always come from this direction before hitting the dramatic change in geography on the western bank that is Buda. Here the terrain becomes hilly and features surviving medieval fortifications. This high ground dominates the low-lying eastern half of the city. The small rocky-mountains of Gellért Hill and Castle Hill provided the cities defenders with unparalleled observation points and fortifications in the form of the Baroque Hungarian Royal Palace and the Citadel. Below and inside the very bedrock itself was a labyrinth of tunnels featuring its own water supply from natural springs. This tunnel system was put to good use by the Axis defenders who set up command bunkers, hospitals and

civilian shelters within them.



German Army Officer Team

SCENARIO 7: THE BACK DOOR LEFT OPEN

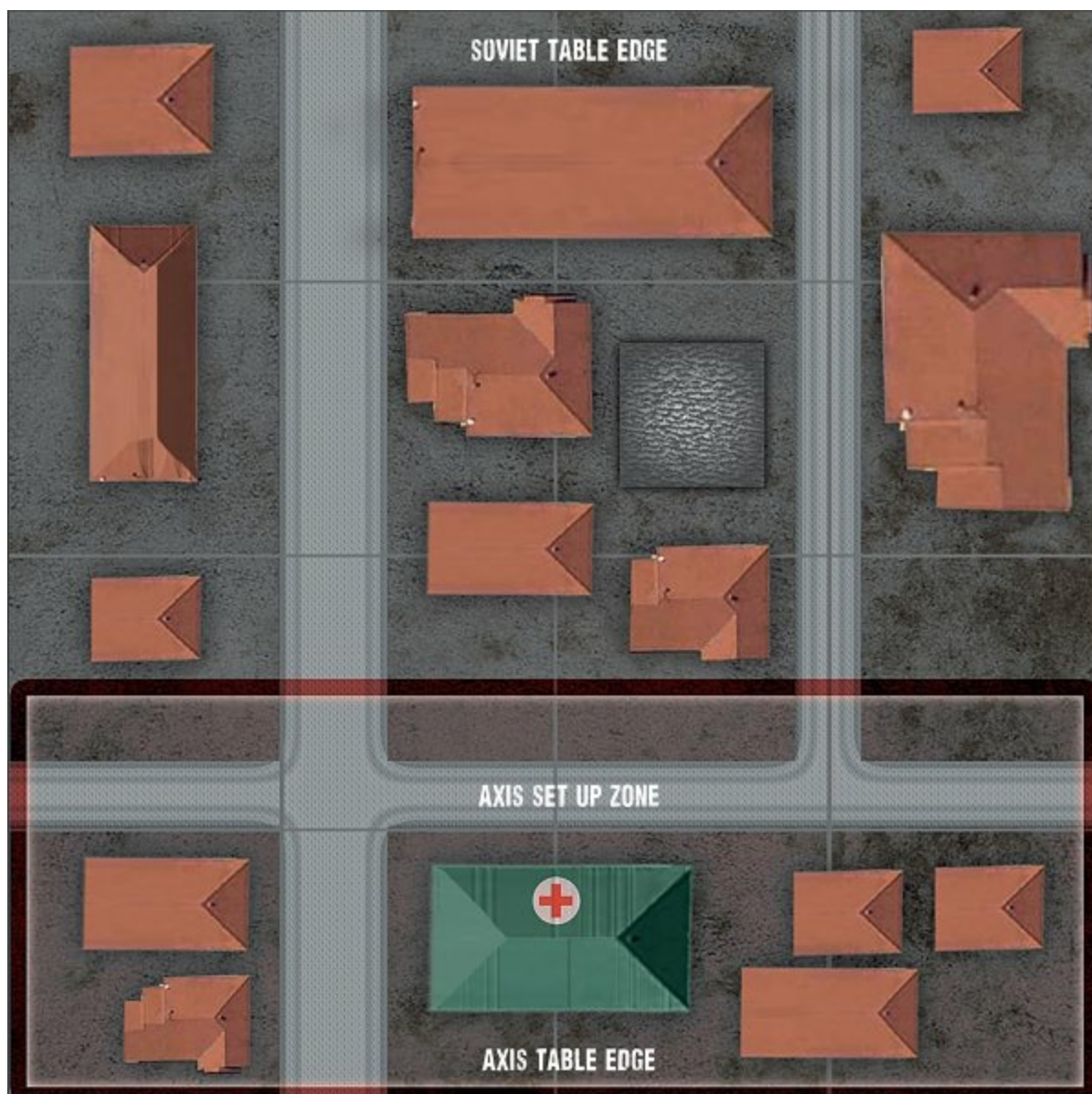
A Soviet Forward Detachment was nearly able to seize Budapest with a *coup de main* on the first day of the siege, Christmas eve 1944, a Sunday. Red Army reconnaissance troops penetrated Buda from the west, which the Axis defence had not planned for, and infiltrated to within 3km of the Royal Palace and the Danube River. Warning of the Soviet incursion came from a mortar spotter of the Hungarian 21st Artillery Battalion positioned in the Szent János Hospital. A patrol of the University Assault Battalion and the local Gendarmerie Battalion were the only Hungarian troops in the area to stop them. A haphazard encounter erupted in the streets around the hospital as the inexperienced young student militia and military policemen scrambled to stop the Russian probe into the heart of the Axis defence. During these dangerous early hours, a desperate call went out to the experienced German troops of the 8th SS Cavalry Division 'Florian Geyer' to redeploy from across the Danube where they had been awaiting the Soviet assault they expected on the Pest bridgehead from the east. The SS men hurriedly dropped their Christmas celebrations and loaded into trucks to race back to over the Danube bridges to the western side of the city. The violence of this confused urban engagement escalated as both sides fed troops piecemeal into the fighting.



Hungarian militia ambush the Soviets

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Soviet player is the attacker and chooses their reinforced platoon from the *Forward Detachment Reconnaissance Party* Theatre Selector [here](#). The Axis player is the defender and chooses their reinforced platoon from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#). The compulsory infantry units should be University Assault Battalion and or Gendarmerie Battalion sections, as should be any further Hungarian infantry units in the platoon. German infantry units should be 8th SS Cavalry Division squads.



Scenario 7: The Back Door Left Open

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be a dense urban environment, criss-crossed by the city streets. The houses should be mostly intact as the Soviet artillery has not been targeting this area at this early stage in the battle. The Szent János Hospital should be represented by a large building in the centre of the Axis deployment zone.

DEPLOYMENT

The Axis player begins with their two compulsory infantry units and HQ deploying within 18" of their table edge. These can be inside buildings if they wish. The remainder of his forces are held in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). The Soviet player starts with all of their forces off the table and must designate at least half of their units (rounding up) as forming a first wave. The remainder are held in Reserve. No outflanking may be attempted by either side.

SPECIAL RULES

TAKEN BY SURPRISE

The successful infiltration of the Red Army reconnaissance force has put the defenders into disarray. The first order dice drawn every turn may be returned to the bag and redrawn if it is an Axis die, if the Soviet player wishes.

DELAYED RESERVES

The desperate call for reinforcements has been taken up by the elite German units, but these men are across the Danube on the other side of the city and will take time to arrive. Any German units in the army list will only begin to arrive using the reserve rules from turn three onwards instead of the usual turn two.



Deadly close quarters fighting in the ruins of Pest

HIDDEN SETUP

The units of the initial Hungarian force benefit from the Hidden rule (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) if they are set up in cover.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviets are trying to continue their advance and take as much ground as possible for follow up forces to exploit. The Axis troops are trying to establish a coherent battle line and stop the Red Army incursion.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points

as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Both players score 1 victory point for destroying an enemy unit. The Axis player scores 3 points for every Soviet unit still in the Soviet half of the table at the end of the game. The Soviet player scores 2 points for every one of their own units within 12” of the Axis table edge at the end of the game.

AFTERMATH

In this first clash, the Soviets managed to capture some advantageous positions on the high ground from the surprised defenders, including János Hospital and Schwabian Hill – were the Soviet red flag could be seen flying. The street fighting moved from house to house and avenue to avenue as the Red Army scouts tried to force the Axis troops back. Being only the reconnaissance force of the Forward Detachment, they did not have enough forces to fully exploit the situation and by the evening had gone to ground, albeit within 2km of the Royal Palace. Once the hastily gathered Axis reinforcements had arrived in force, Lieutenant-Colonel László Veresváry launched a counter-attack with the men of the 8th SS Cavalry and machines of the Hungarian 1st Assault Artillery Battalion which drove out the Soviets holding the János Hospital and secured the approach to the Royal Palace. The Axis defenders had narrowly avoided the Red Army occupying all the tactically vital high ground of Buda, sitting right behind the main Axis defences deployed east of the Danube in the Pest lowlands.

THE FIRST ASSAULT ON PEST

While Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian Front established an outer ring to contain the Budapest garrison and also prepare against any German relief attempts, Malinovsky received the assignment of reducing Budapest. He began in the east of the city, when the Soviet offensive along the entire Pest bridgehead began on Christmas Day 1944. Five Soviet and one Romanian infantry Corps faced a paper-thin Axis defence line with less than one infantryman defending each 100m stretch. The redeployment of the 8th SS Cavalry to Buda meant the first and second defence lines in Pest needed to be almost abandoned, allowing an easier defence of the shorter third belt. The retreat took place under constant attack causing large gaps to open up, like between the 22nd SS Cavalry and the 13th Panzer Division. T-34 tanks overran the lightly manned trenches of the Hungarian 12th Reserve Division. Although the defenders knocked out two tanks with their panzerfausts, the Soviets broke through and were able to turn on the defence lines and pour fire on them from behind. The battalions of the Hungarian 12th Reserve Division could only muster 15–20 men each by 28 December.

It was clear to the command of both German Army Group South and IX SS Mountain Corps it was impossible to hold the entire city. Wildenbruch, commander of the garrison, requested permission to abandon Pest on 26 December and prepare for a breakout, which Hitler categorically refused, demanding that Pest be held at all cost. The Soviet command was also anxious to explore means of bringing this bitter city fight to a swift end. Malinovsky and Tobulkin knew from their experience at Stalingrad that a long siege was likely, and it was vital to future operations that Budapest be taken as quickly as possible. With Stalin's permission they sent negotiators under a flag of truce to parley with the Axis defenders. The terms they offered were generous; the German and Hungarian troops would not be harmed and officers could keep their side arms, they would even be repatriated immediately after the war ended. The outcome of the negotiations was tragic as both Soviet officers ended up being killed by mistake on their way to German lines or on their way back by artillery shells and anti-tank mines. Soviet propaganda used this fiasco to urge

their troops on and give no quarter when the offensive resumed on 29 December.

The shortened German battle line still covered most of Pest, roughly following a heightened railway embankment that ringed the eastern half of the city and extended south through Csepel Island. Almost 1,000 Soviet heavy guns including 122mm, 152mm, and 203mm howitzers, were brought up to support the attack with a steamroller of direct fire. The streets became strewn with rubble, almost one million civilians huddled in the cellars of houses which were aflame and clouds of bluish-yellow dust lingered in the air after the explosion of thousands of shells.



A Soviet Urban Assault Group clears Budapest one building at a time

SCENARIO 8: STREET FIGHTING IN PEST

In Pest, the Soviets pressed their attack through the eastern suburbs along several main avenues of approach, especially in the combat zone in the centre, in front of the Romanian VII Army Corps. The attacks were immediately successful and they captured the makeshift airfield at the city racecourse, leaving the emergency airfield on Csepel Island the only possible landing site.

The Soviet Corps commanders introduced a range of new measures to deal with the brutal reality of street fighting. The Soviets sought to split the German-Hungarian defenders into smaller groups and destroy them piecemeal. To do this, each division formed special assault groups armed with submachine guns and supported with flame throwers and direct firing artillery. Each of these groups would advance on a short front, 400–800m wide and bound by parallel streets. These assaults were also supported by armour, assault guns, and several Lend-Lease Sherman tanks, to slowly grind down the Axis strong points.

In response the defenders had mixed their combat units, integrating Hungarian units into German ones to reduce desertions. Street barricades were thrown up at important junctures and mines, barbed wire, and even electric fences added to help hold the reducing bridgehead. The axis frontline consisted of machine gun nests and fortified foxholes, with the situation being so fluid and confused, these became the key points of resistance for the Soviets to overcome. Heavy weapons had extremely restricted fields of fire and the roads were so churned up and rubble-strewn that even tanks could no longer use them. House-to-House fighting with grenades, submachine guns, pistols, and spades was the only way forward.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Allied player is the attacker and may choose their force from either the Soviet *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#), or *1944 Allied Romanian Infantry Division* Theatre Selector [here](#). The Axis player is the defender and chooses their force from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be dense urban terrain: apartment blocks, buildings, ruins, rubble and streets. This scenario does not represent a particular battle but allows you to recreate any number of actions of this type. The fight for each block of apartments, shop, and even street corner became its own desperate battle. You can replay this scenario multiple times and just rearrange the terrain and forces to give you a totally new battle to fight in the Pest city districts. Divide the table into four quarters, these are the areas you will be fighting for control of.

DEPLOYMENT

The Axis player begins with at least half of his forces set up within 24" of his table edge. The remainder of his forces are held in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). The Allied player starts with all of his forces off table and must designate at least half of his units as the First Wave. The remainder are held in Reserve. No outflanking may be attempted unless either player chooses *Sewer movement* as one of their City Siege Assets (see City Siege Assets [here](#)).

SPECIAL RULES

CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Be sure both players choose the appropriate number of assets from [here](#) to help form their strategies for this battle.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviet and Romanian assault groups are methodically reducing the Axis bridgehead block by city block, they must take and control as much area as they can. The Axis defenders are desperately trying to hold the line.

FIRST TURN

All order dice are in the bag, begin drawing and the game commences. The Soviet player's forces enter the table on turn one using the *first wave* rules by being given an *Advance* or *Run* order. Note that these units do not require an order test to do so.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.



Scenario 8: Street Fighting in Pest

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. The two quarters closest to the Axis table edge are both worth four victory points each and the two table quarters closest to the Allied side are worth two victory points each to whoever controls them. A table quarter is considered controlled by one side if they have an infantry or artillery unit with the majority of its models inside and no enemy infantry or artillery units with the majority of their models also within the quarter. Once a table quarter is taken by one side its

units may move on and it remains theirs until the opposing player can move one of their own units into it.



Soviet Medium Mortar Team

AFTERMATH

Although the Soviets had experience from the gruelling battle of Stalingrad, with the roles now reversed as they are now the Attacker, they now faced significant new challenges. The new Soviet fighting methods forced the Axis troops to give ground, but they inflicted enough casualties to slow the Soviet advance to a crawl in the ocean of 100-metre-high apartment blocks. It was also the first time the Red Army had laid siege to a European metropolis of almost a million inhabitants and the buildings were mostly made of stone, making artillery and ground attack aircraft less effective.

The true horror of street fighting showed itself as the Axis defenders selectively withdrew, which shortened the defence lines and making losses disproportionality in favour of the defenders. The deeper the Soviets advanced into Budapest, the more savage the fighting became as the defences were tougher to overcome. One advantage the Soviets had was they could rotate their troops out of the frontline and rest them for short periods, unlike the trapped Axis defenders. Between December and February no less than one Mechanised Corps and 26 rifle divisions took part in the attack on Budapest.

BLOCK BY BLOCK

Axis units also began to launch local counter-attacks. The 13th Panzer Division recaptured some ground but stalled as they lost four panzers and nine half-tracks to Soviet tank hunters amongst the rubble. The streets of Budapest were a deadly place for a tank crew, the Soviets lost more than 200 of their tanks over the course of the siege. One group of Soviet infantry was cut off by the counter-attack and could only break out by calling in artillery on its own position and adjusting the fire as they moved. Captain Nikolaichuk was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union medal for organising this action. The fighting was a bitter and gruelling affair as Zakharov, Malinovsky's former Chief-of-Staff account wrote:

“Every building had been turned into a fortress. During the (first) twenty days of the offensive, our troops only took 114 blocks out of a total of 722”.

The morale of the Hungarian troops, who made up 60% of the troops engaged at the Pest bridgehead, was a major cause for concern for the Germans. The war diary of Army Group South records that 100 men of the Hungarian 12th Reserve Division had crossed over to the enemy on 19 November, with 1,200 more following by the 4th of December. Most of these men were recently conscripted and untrained. Offsetting this was some more motivated Hungarian units like the paratroopers, the 6th, 8th, 38th Infantry Regiments, 1st Armoured Division, and the 10th Reconnaissance Battalion, who were all praised for their courageous counter-attacks in German dispatches.

TOP SECRET

SUBTERRANEAN WAR IN BUDAPEST

Just like at Stalingrad, and indeed all sieges, the protracted fighting of Budapest motivated both sides to seek advantage by taking the fight below ground. The Soviets had become masters of infiltration and small-unit raids, which they used to acquire intelligence by snatching unwary Axis defenders, in particular officers. The most spectacular exploit was by a six-man unit of Naval infantry, who managed to infiltrate deep behind Axis lines and into the Royal Palace of Buda. They had crawled through a sewer main to wait for hours in the shadows for a high value target to walk by. Rewarded for their patience they sighted two German officers who they grabbed, killing one and dragging the other back for interrogation.

The Hungarian garrison however boasted some of the best subterranean fighters in the siege. The recently raised Vannay Battalion heavily recruited from Budapest's municipal workers, these men had intimate knowledge of the city's countless culverts, maintenance tunnels, subway and sewer system. A favoured tactic of this unit was to contact Hungarian civilians by telephone in the houses behind Soviet lines, and discover where the Red Army men were sleeping. With this knowledge they would then work their way through the sewers or cellars to emerge from both below and the roof above, catching the Soviets off guard. Specially trained dogs were also used by the Vannay's men to give warning of Soviets ahead down dark tunnels as they advanced.

PEST FALLS

On 8 January the Soviet troops were only 4 kilometres from the Danube, and the total Axis bridgehead was only 15 kilometres from north to south. Csepel Island, with its vital airfield and factories, still producing panzerfausts, had to be abandoned on 9 January. By 14 January the Hungarian 10th Infantry Division and the Assault Artillerymen of Group Billnitzer were locked in a savage fight for the Eastern Railway station against Romanian infantry, their Zrínyi assault guns inflicting massive losses on their ancestral enemies. The fighting swept from track to track amongst the rolling stock and into the station itself. The defenders were eventually driven out in close quarters fighting and the exhausted and depleted Romanians were withdrawn from the hard-won rubble of the once grand train station by Malinovsky himself. The Romanian Corps had suffered 33% casualties in just a few weeks of street fighting and the Soviet command noticed that wherever the Romanians were deployed, it made the Hungarians fanatically stubborn rather than their usual half-hearted efforts against Soviet attackers. With the Romanians withdrawn, the Soviet advance now swept passed the many embassies and ornate villas on the broad Andrássy Boulevard.



Soviet 45mm guns blast the Axis defenders from their strong point

SCENARIO 9: WITHDRAWAL ACROSS THE DANUBE

By 17 January it was clear the further defence of Pest was futile. While the frontline in Buda had hardly moved, the Pest garrison, under the command of General Schmidhuber, was within a few hundred metres of being split in half as the Soviets had penetrated the inner ring road, and the bridges over the Danube were only just behind that. Faced with the annihilation of the entire Pest group, Hitler finally allowed the garrison to abandon the eastern half of the city to consolidate the defence in Buda on the western bank of the Danube. Malinovsky ordered the attacks intensified and the 12th and 18th Guards Rifle Divisions reached the Danube through hand-to-hand fighting and cut the bridgehead in two on 14 January. The defenders did not give up however, and some buildings changed hands up to five times that day. On the night of 17 January and the following day the remaining 3,600 men from 13th Panzer Division, *Feldherrnhalle* Panzergrenadier Division, 22nd SS Cavalry Division 'Maria Theresia', 271st Volksgrenadier Division and the 12th and 10th Hungarian Divisions staged a bloody fighting withdrawal across the Chain and Elisabeth bridges, while under constant artillery bombardment and strafing runs by Sturmovik ground attack aircraft.



Waffen SS squad in winter gear

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Allied player is the attacker and chooses their force from the Soviet *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#). The Axis player is the defender and chooses their force from the

Budapest Pocket Defenders Theatre Selector [here](#).



Hungarian assault guns of Group Billnitzer fight in the streets of Pest

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be dense urban terrain; apartment blocks, buildings, ruins, rubble and streets. This can open up as it nears the Axis table edge, which is the street alongside the Danube River bank. There should be at least three streets running the length of the table from the Soviet table edge to the Axis table edge. A street barricade is set up at each of these three streets no further than 12" on from the Axis table edge. These are in effect objective markers as well as terrain.



Scenario 9: Withdrawal Across the Danube

DEPLOYMENT

The Axis player begins with deploying all of his forces set up within 12" of the western table edge. Units can be placed up against the street barricades already deployed. The Allied player starts with all of his forces off table and must designate at least half of his units as the First Wave. The remainder are held in Reserve. No outflanking may be attempted and neither player may choose *Sewer movement* as one of their City Siege Assets (see City Siege Assets [here](#)).

SPECIAL RULES

CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Be sure both players choose the appropriate number of assets from [here](#) to help form their strategies for this battle. Note that one asset is already preselected for the Axis player; *Street Barricades*, and one for the Allied player; *Preliminary bombardment*. These count towards the players total number of asset choices. Also note that *Sewer Movement* may not be chosen for this scenario by either player.



Hungarians defend a street barricade in Pest

STURMOVIK STRAFING RUNS

Once during the game the Soviet player may call in an airstrike using the rules on page 85 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. There is no Forward Air Observer to call in the airstrike so the Soviet player may choose any non-hidden Axis unit to call the strike in on.

FIGHTING WITHDRAWAL

The Pest garrison rear-guard is withdrawing under fire, fighting to hold the line long enough for the majority of units to escape before they themselves can attempt the perilous crossing of the Danube. From turn two onwards, before any order dice are drawn, the Axis player must remove one unit from the table, it has evacuated. Remember to also remove its order die from the bag. These

removed units do not count as destroyed for victory points purposes, they have made good their escape and will reinforce the defenders in Buda. At the end of turn four, the Axis player declares one of the three Street Barricades to be no longer needed and this objective is removed from the game. Note, any barricades already held by the Allied player cannot be chosen for removal as an objective. The barricade remains as terrain but neither side may claim it as an objective or receive any victory points for holding it.

OBJECTIVE

The Pest garrison has finally received the order to pull out and is staging a fighting withdrawal. The Axis defender must hold off the Soviet assaults long enough to give the space and time for their forces and Pest's civilians to escape across the Danube river to the Buda side, and blow up the bridges behind them. The Allied player must take the streets needed for the Axis troops to move toward the bridges and stop them escaping with their forces in any large numbers.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw! The three street barricades securing the Axis escape routes are worth 3 victory points each to whichever side controls them. To control a Street Barricade there must be a model from one of your infantry or artillery units within 3" of it at the end of the turn, and there must be no enemy infantry or artillery units within 3" of it. Once you capture an objective, you hold it until the enemy captures it back. Both players also receive one victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.

AFTERMATH

The scene on the Chain and Elisabeth bridges over the Danube was one of horrendous chaos. Both civilians and soldiers choked the bridges in desperate flight to escape over to Buda. All who could walk, hobble or run were mixed in with military vehicles and civilian horse drawn wagons as they evacuated falling Pest. Soviet Sturmovik fighter-bombers flew low along the Danube and raked the exposed masses, and each time an artillery round landed amongst them it threw men and machines out into the river below. German flak guns situated in Buda's heights attempted to give cover but mainly just shot up Pest's historic waterfront buildings and hotels. The Hungarian commander, General Ivan Hindy, protested that the bridges should not be blown up behind the retreating Axis garrison as the Danube would soon ice over and be able to be crossed anyway. German engineers ignored him and destroyed the magnificent Chain and Elisabeth bridges in the early dawn hours of 18 January. Most of the Pest garrison escaped, but several Hungarian units were left behind when the bridges were blown. Some had not received the order to retreat, but many of these units had decided the war was over for them anyway, and headed down into the cellars to await capture by the Soviets. The only positive from this disaster for the Axis troops was the men from the Pest bridgehead could now reinforce the Buda garrison and hold a much shorter front.



German Sd Kfz 251/2 Mortar Carrier



RELIEF ATTEMPTS

As the fighting in Pest intensified, Hitler ordered SS *Obergruppenführer* Otto Gille to immediately prepare his IV SS Panzer Corps, then refitting in the Poland, for deployment to Hungary to relieve the trapped German Corps in Budapest. At this time of extreme peril for the Reich on both Eastern and Western Fronts the Führer, against the warnings of Guderian, stripped reserves from the central axis of attack on Berlin to begin a buildup of panzer formations in Hungary. Thinking he could buy time for the rest of his forces by securing the Lake Balaton oil fields he had made up his mind that Hungary would be the place he would make his last stand. He was obsessed with the idea that a hope of survival for the Reich lay here in securing the oil in Hungary and delivering a massive blow to the western Allies in the Ardennes.

To this end, he sent the 200 tanks and 60,000 men of IV SS Panzer Corps and the 96th and 711th Infantry Divisions to the Carpathian Basin. In his daily briefings at the *Wolfschanze*, the maps of the Hungarian theatre of operations were always on the top of the pile and received priority over all other theatres. All available reserves were sent south, by 1945 six elite Waffen SS Panzer Divisions and a half of all Wehrmacht panzer divisions on the eastern front would be committed to Hungary. The Soviet *Stavka* was delighted to see their grand strategy of applying pressure on the flanks was showing signs of working, as the Red Army was poised on Oder River, only 60km from Berlin.

The immediate concern in this theatre was to keep Budapest in Axis hands, with two possible routes of advance to relieve the besieged capital. Operation *Paula* would see the panzers attack from the south-west over a longer distance, but across very suitable tank country on the plains near Székesfehérvár. Given the distance, this option would cost a lot more fuel and delay the offensive by a further five days. Operation *Konrad*, a plan to attack from the north involved a much shorter distance and offered the element of surprise, but carried greater risks owing to the rough wooded terrain of the Pilis Hills. Guderian preferred *Paula* but due to the cost in fuel and time the Supreme High Command of the German Army decided on *Konrad*. Even though only half the men and machines sent south as a part of the regrouping SS IV Panzer Corps were in place at the railhead town of Komárom, the first of what was to become three offensives was launched anyway.



Men of the 8th SS race to Buda to stop a Soviet incursion

SCENARIO 10: OPERATION *KONRAD I*

The surprise offensive began on New Year's Day, with the lead elements of the newly arrived 3rd SS *Totenkopf* (Death's Head) and 5th SS *Wiking* (Viking) Panzer Divisions advancing in column. No artillery bombardment was laid down so as to retain the element of surprise. The elite SS *Panzertruppen* crashed into the overextended Soviet 4th Guards Army near Táta. Meanwhile the German 96th Infantry Division, crossing the Danube from the north by assault boat, established two bridgeheads behind the Soviet troops. Much like the German offensive in the Ardennes in the weeks before, this attack took the Allied command by surprise. Even the terrain was Ardennes-like, with the narrow roads and tracks winding through the forests of the Pilis Mountains. Although Red Army Intelligence was aware that Gille's Corps had recently redeployed into Hungary from Poland, it had lost track of the two elite SS divisions, mainly because of their extreme radio security procedures. Malinovsky had also been expecting a relief attempt on Budapest, but from the south. As such the 31st Guards Rifle Corps, which faced Gille's panzers, only had 9 anti-tank nests along a 42km front. The Soviet failure to track these dangerous units, and the foregoing of any artillery preparation enabled the Germans to achieve a complete tactical surprise.

FORCES

This scenario uses the *Tank Wars* rules and armoured platoon structure for the German force. The German armoured platoon is chosen from the *IV SS Panzer Corps* Theatre Selector [here](#). The Soviet player has a 25% point advantage over the German player (e.g. 2,000pts versus 2,500pts). The Soviet reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be dense woods upon hilly ground, with the occasional farmstead or rural house. There should be many narrow earthen roads criss-crossing these hilly woods. At least three, and up to five of these roads should exit the Soviet players table edge.

DEPLOYMENT

The Soviet player must now set up to half their units (rounding down) in their deployment zone, which is up to 12" onto the table from their long table edge. No vehicles may be set up in this initial force. The vehicles and any remaining forces must be placed in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). No Soviet units may use the outflanking rules to deploy. At least half of the German players units are now formed in to a first wave which will enter from the northern table edge, with the remainder (if any) placed in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

COMPLETE TACTICAL SURPRISE

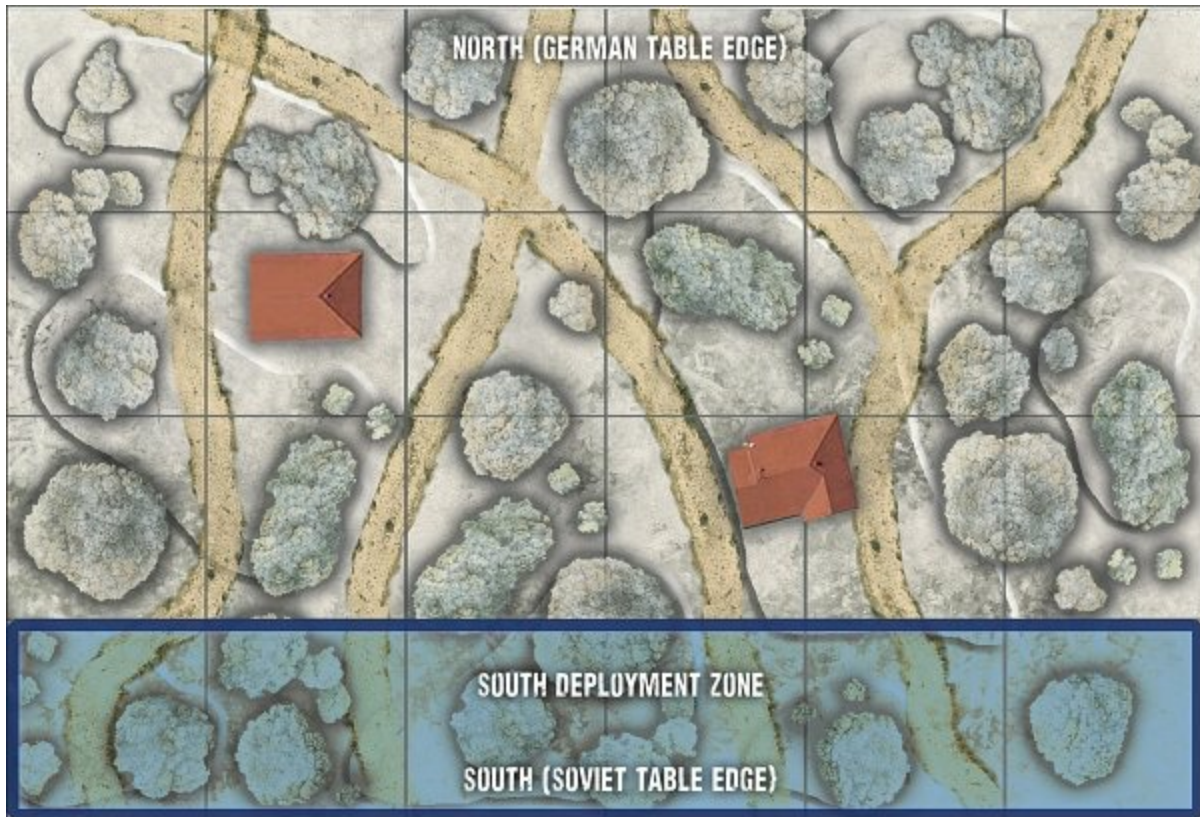
Gille's SS Panzer Corps has redeployed undetected from Poland to the Pilis Hills, and the bold *Panzertruppen* have forgone any artillery preparation to soften up their targets in order to gain the element of surprise. The Soviet player begins the game only being able to use the same amount of order dice as the German players total order dice count at the start of the game regardless of how many order dice he should have. For example, if the German players force has 10 order dice and the Soviet player has 21 order dice, then the Soviet player can only put 10 of his 21 dice into the dice bag to issue orders with. The Soviet player retains his full amount of order dice but may only put into the dice bag this reduced amount. Each turn after the first the Soviet order dice pool is increased by one. The Soviet player's order dice only drop below his starting amount in the bag if casualties mean he has less units than that total, then order dice are removed as normal from that point on. Obviously, the Soviet player will have many more units than he has order dice he can issue each turn, so he will only be able to use a limited number of his units in any given turn. Those units which do not receive an order die may always be given a Down order as a normal reaction. These Down orders may be retained from turn to turn as per normal.

OBJECTIVE

The German forces must begin to break through the Soviet siege ring and fight their way through to the trapped garrison of Budapest. Taken by surprise, the Soviet player must attempt to contain this formidable panzer force until help and reinforcements can be sent by the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along the northern table edge and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.



Scenario 10: Operation *Konrad I*

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Both players score 1 victory point for destroying an enemy unit. The German player scores 2 points for every German unit inside the Soviet deployment zone

at the end of the game, and 4 points for every unit which leaves the table from the Soviet players table edge. German units may voluntarily leave the game via the Soviet table edge and do not count as being destroyed. The Soviet players scores 2 points for every German unit within 24" of the Axis table edge at the end of the game.



Soviet Sub-machine gun squad

AFTERMATH

Although in a strategic sense the war was all but lost, January 1945 would become the last time which the Germans fought the Soviets with some possibility of securing any sort of tactical victory in the war. The Waffen SS onslaught from northwest opened up an extraordinary month of manoeuvre warfare, with Székesfehérvár and Bicske as the hubs and Budapest always the objective. In just three days Gille's panzer divisions had driven 48 kilometres over rugged terrain, half the distance needed to reach Budapest. By 3 January, Marshal Tolbukhin, commanding the outer encirclement ring, reacted to the severity of the developing threat by rushing four additional Corps north from the Székesfehérvár area to reinforce his crumbling line. At the same time, Malinovsky, commanding the inner encirclement ring of the siege, had to withdraw a rifle Corps out of the city fighting to send it west. This hasty re-deployment of Soviet forces only barely managed to stop the German offensive at Bicske, just 28 kilometres from Budapest.

Fearing a simultaneous breakout would be attempted by the Budapest garrison, Tolbukhin had erected defensive lines with anti-tank guns facing both Gille's relief forces and the potential escaping garrison troops. He did not know that Hitler had once again expressly forbidden for Pfeffer Wildenbruch to launch any such break out.

The attacking IV SS Panzer Corps captured the Pilis Hills by 6 January, but their advance was stopped by the Soviets near Bicske. The terrain over which the offensive was launched created two crucial factors which hampered the offensive efforts: first, in narrow winding roads of the Pilis Hills it was easy for the Red Army to set up roadblocks with anti-tank guns; second, the long and exposed pocket that would have developed alongside the Danube after a breakthrough could have easily been cut off by the Soviets. In the end the Red Army was able to slow down the assault of the SS panzers and ensure that their own reserves had enough room for manoeuvre.

At the same time as Gille's men attacked along the southern bank of the Danube, Malinovsky's best armor formation, the 250 vehicles of the 6th Guards Tank Army, moved in the opposite direction along the northern bank of the

Danube and on 6 January toward the rail junction at Komárom, which was the main Axis supply terminus for much of the Hungarian campaign and the assembly point for Gille's IV SS Panzer Corps. By 8 January, the attack had stalled in Komárom's outskirts, much as Gille's panzer Corps was blocked at Bicske. The German losses between 1 and 7 January amounted to some 3,500 men, almost 10 percent of the IV SS Panzer Corps were killed, wounded, or missing and 39 tanks were destroyed.



German StuG III with tank riders in winter gear

OPERATION *KONRAD II*

Although blocked at Bicske, the tenacious General Gille did not give up. As ordered, he pulled his *Wiking* Division out of the line and within three days it reappeared just south of Esztergom near the Danube bend. The command of German Army Group South had decided to launch a pincer attack with Gille's forces in the north and newly arrived Group Brieth in the south attempting to break through between Székesfehérvár and Mór. The objective of this joint attack was to recapture parts of the Magrit Line and surround the Red Army units on the western slopes of the Vértes Hills.

In miserable weather, the battle-hardened *Wiking* Division once again advanced south toward Budapest. By 12 January, the Scandinavian volunteers of the SS Westland Regiment reached Pilisszentkereszt, just 22km from northern Buda. That morning German soldiers spotted the church spires and buildings of the distinctive Budapest skyline poking through the morning fog from the highlands near Dobogoko. Even so, the German relief force was unable to exploit this small breakthrough and was ordered to pull back and regroup on 12 January after a 24-hour tug-of-war between Gille and the army supreme command. Hitler and Guderian had never expected Konrad II to succeed, favouring a southern attack from Székesfehérvár.

Tragically, inside Budapest, hopes of relief had run high. The citizens and garrison could both hear and see the approaching fighting and at night the Gille's SS relief force communicated with the defenders using flares. The Soviets now hoped for, and even encouraged, a break-out, going so far as to create a 1km gap in their own siege lines near Buda. Malinovsky, nervous of how long it was taking to capture Budapest, was even willing to let the defenders escape if it meant a swift capture of the city. Remaining unwilling to go against Hitler's directive that Budapest remain a fortress city, Pfeffer Wildenbruch, ever the obedient policeman, did not allow his trapped men to fight out of the pocket, even though this would have had a reasonable chance of success at this point.

On 12 January the Soviets launched their grand offensive from Poland toward Berlin, finding no significant reserves in their way. Hitler stubbornly ignored his general staff's advice to immediately abandon all further attempts to relieve

Budapest and bring back the panzers to protect the Reich's capital.



German Panzer IV Ausf H

SCENARIO 11: OPERATION *KONRAD III*

The day the Pest bridgehead collapsed, the Germans disengaged Gille's battered but still dangerous IV SS Panzer Corps from *Konrad II* and with utmost secrecy redeployed it south by rail to the region between Lake Balaton and Székesfehérvár. Having failed twice to break through to Budapest from the north, the southern option would now be executed. The two SS Panzer Divisions only had about 30 operational tanks apiece, so they were joined by 1st and 3rd Panzer Divisions as well as the King Tigers of the 509th Heavy Panzer Battalion. Once again, Soviet signal intercepts failed to track the SS Corps and the reconnaissance section of the 4th Army had lost control of the situation. Gille's tanks rolled over the unprepared 135th Rifle Corps.

Tanks equipped with the new *Wunderwaffe* infrared sights were deployed for the first time, gaining a deadly advantage in nocturnal operations. The Panther and Panzer IV tanks rampaged through the enemy positions, gaining 20km that first day. The last great panzer raid of the war was unfolding as the spearheads reached the banks of the river Danube on 20 January. At the river crossing at Dunapentele, the panzers were even able to shoot up Soviet river traffic. They had cut off the 3rd Ukrainian Front from its supply bases.

In the chaos, the Soviets were still somehow able to move more than 40,000 soldiers and large quantities of equipment to the east bank in just a few days, all the while being bombed by the energetic Luftwaffe. On 21 January, with the arrival of Gille's SS panzers, the nervous Soviet troops had blown up their own pontoon bridges at Dunapentele and Dunaföldvár. Cutting off those units still in action. Tolbukhin had informed Stalin of the crisis, expecting him to order his men to stand in place and hold at all cost. The commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front was surprised to actually be given a free hand by Stalin, who's attitude had changed from the early campaigns where his inflexible decisions drove millions to captivity or death. The Red Army was running out of men, and Stalin was anxious he may soon have to face the western allies in battle after the Third Reich was defeated. Stalin had given permission to fall back, however Tolbukhin now chose a more courageous option. The Marshal would hold the bridgehead because he believed that it would be pointless to give up the hard-

won ground only to face a second crossing of the Danube and the suffering that would cost his men.



Scenario 11: Operation *Konrad III*

FORCES

This scenario uses the Tank Wars rules and armoured platoon structure. The German armoured platoon is chosen from either the *IV SS Panzer Corps* Theatre Selector or *Panzer Kampfgruppe* Theatre Selector [here](#) and [here](#). The Soviet armoured platoon is chosen from the *Guards Mechanised Brigade* Theatre Selector [here](#). If the Soviet player is brave enough they may even depict a Red Army Rifle Corps force and chose a reinforced platoon from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book.

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be mostly an open plain with the occasional farmstead, light woods and marsh scattered about.

DEPLOYMENT

Both players roll a die, the highest score chooses a long table edge as theirs, the other player has the opposite long table edge. Both player's forces begin off the table at the start of the game. The Soviet player must declare at least half their units to form a first wave. The remainder of his forces are held in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). The entire German force is formed into a first wave and will all enter the table on turn one by issuing an Advance or Run order. Note that no test is required for units entering the table as part of a first wave. No units may deploy using the outflank rules.

SPECIAL RULES

DAWN ASSAULT

The German panzers want to make full use of their new infrared sights and so time their attack for maximum advantage. The Night Fighting rules from page 219 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook will be in effect. The type of game is Dawn Assault, so follow the rules for the Reduced Visibility being lifted from turn two on page 220 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

OBJECTIVE

The German forces are rampaging through hastily deployed Soviet units in their path. They must keep up the momentum of their advance and not lose too many panzers. The Soviet player must attempt to blunt the panzer attack and slow it down.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the both players must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along each player's long table edge, and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score one victory point for each enemy unit destroyed. In addition, the Soviet player scores a further two victory points for each German panzer (a vehicle with 9+ armour) destroyed. The German player receives two victory points for each panzer (a vehicle with 9+ armour) unit which ends the game in the Soviet deployment zone or three victory points if it moves off the Soviet players table edge. In this game German units may voluntarily move off the Soviet players table edge.



Soviet IS-2 heavy tank

AFTERMATH

The *Konrad III* offensive gave the Soviets their last operational crisis of the war. The fighting was heavy, with the Soviet 18th Tank Corps being virtually wiped out and the counter-attack of the 7th Mechanised Corps completely crushed. The Red Army lost 193 tanks, 229 guns, and 257 anti-tank guns between January 18 and 21 alone, and Gille's SS panzers were able to split Tolbukhin's forces and pin them back against the banks of the Danube. Such was the gravity of the crisis, two rifle Corps assigned to the final assault on Buda were hurriedly redirected south with the 5th Guard Cavalry Corps and rode 100 kilometres in twenty-four hours, arriving just in time to contain the German attacks. On 24 January, the panzers conducted a last-gasp attack that reached to within 20km of Buda's southern suburbs. The desperate garrison managed to make faint radio contact with the spearhead of the bloodied relief force, signaling their hopes:

'Warm wishes towards your success and our liberation, ten thousand of our wounded await you.'

However, the steam had run out of the offensive, with less than 30 operational panzers left between the *Wiking* and *Totenkopf* Divisions, they were unable to continue the advance. The besieged garrison of Budapest missed its final chance of breaking out when Tolbukhin committed his last reserves to the fighting on 27 January and began a counter-attack with the 30th and 104th Rifle Corps and the 23rd Tank Corps. These were all troops who had been stationed in the southern siege ring to contain the Axis garrison, but they no longer had the 70,000 defenders to deal with as only about 25,000 men were left on their feet by this time. The attacking German spearheads that had reached the Danube were in danger of being cut off by Soviet divisions from Simontornya in the south as well as the north. Tolbukhin ordered the pincers to begin closing from both directions. Although the Germans destroyed 122 Soviet tanks on the first day, they had to abandon all their hard-won gains and retreat. The relentless counter-attack by Soviet forces meant by the beginning of February the Germans had given up most of their territorial gains. The trapped garrison of Budapest could not be rescued.

LAST STAND IN BUDA



The *Konrad III* offensive had begun as Pest, the eastern half of the Hungarian capital, had fallen on 18 January 1945. The Buda garrison looked upon an apocalyptic scene below them as Pest was engulfed in flame and smoke, the beautiful bridges across the Danube destroyed. Although the SS panzer spearheads had driven the Soviets back to the Danube, they were halted still some 25km short of reaching the Buda suburbs. Gille's panzers were forced to withdraw under the hammer blows of Tolbukhin's relentless counter attacks and by February even the most optimistic of Buda's defenders had to accept the fact that there would be no rescue.

Although the Red Army had nearly seized the heart of the Buda position on Christmas day, the front in this western half of the city had shifted less than a few hundred metres since then. Malinovsky's rifle divisions had concentrated on reducing Pest and Tolbukhin's Mechanised Brigades had been fighting off the German relief attempts. On 22 January, joined by forces from recently liberated Pest, the Soviets began concerted attacks along the entire Buda bridgehead. The *Stavka* was extremely unsatisfied with the apparent slow progress at the front as only 114 of Buda's 722 city blocks had been taken in the previous 20 days of fighting.

Buda was a tough nut to crack, with one flank protected by the frozen yet exposed approach of the Danube River, and the other three sides featured formidable defensive positions amongst the high ground surrounding the Castle District. The key heights of Sashegy Hill and Schwabian Hill were turned into fortified strong points. The loss of either would be disastrous as they dominated the whole southern part of the city. Ferocious battles were fought over these hills with the Soviets launching battalion sized assaults supported by intensive artillery fire and waves of fighter aircraft. On 3 January the position on Rózsadomb Hill changed hands 7 times that single day.

All this time the bitter fighting raged over the heads of the nearly 800,000 civilians who were also trapped in the city. Most had retreated into cellars and lived a rat's life underground in makeshift shelters, as it was simply too deadly to be on the streets. Not that this stopped people emerging and searching for food and water, a tragically deadly task now. In Buda, the populations of whole suburbs had been relocated to live in a system of ancient tunnels below the bedrock of Castle Hill. The dank limestone catacombs housed hospitals and the communities maintained telephone lines and even the post system during the

siege. To add to this suffering the winter of 1944–45 was also unusually cold.



Soviet anti-tank rifle teams stalk a Hungarian Hetzer

VÁROSMAJOR GRANGE

One major weak point in the infinitely defensible hilly terrain was an approach through the large city park of Városmajor Grange. If the Soviets could attack successfully through this open space it would lead them straight into the heart of the defence less than 2 kilometres from the Danube and the IX SS Mountain Corps HQ under Castle Hill, splitting the cauldron in two. Acutely aware of this the German command established 3 successive defence lines to bar this approach. The first line featured four German MG-42 positions placed in trenches and the approach blocked by mines and barbed wire. Behind, at the foot of the raised Cogwheel Railway embankment were more machine guns, this time camouflaged by shutters from the nearby houses, which had also been mined in case the Soviets overrun these first two lines and took shelter in them. The fortifications also featured a Hungarian 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft cannon hidden behind a movable screen made from a Persian rug from the city Opera house.

These formidable defences were held by the men of the Vannay Battalion, a Hungarian paramilitary unit raised just weeks before the siege began by Major Vannay, who had personally recruited First World War veterans from the city's municipal works and teamed them up with young volunteers. He instituted a buddy system of "Uncles and Pups" to use the older men's experience to help keep the younger recruits alive. Their intimate knowledge of the city made them uniquely adept at urban fighting. The sentries posted across the defence lines were assigned a dog to keep them warm and could communicate with each other by using telephone lines installed in the municipal drains. The heavy weapons crews would wait below ground in cellars, protected from the heavy Soviet bombardments until needed.

On 1 January the Soviet 180th Rifle Division overran the Vannay men's machine gun positions with 8 tanks and a heavy mortar barrage. However, the Hungarians successfully counter-attacked and knocked out several T-34's using their hand held *panzerfaust* launchers, recapturing the Cogwheel Railway embankment. The defenders proceeded to use the wrecks of two of these tanks to dig foxholes underneath, transforming them into near indestructible machine

gun bunkers. The Vannay men were able to hold off several regimental sized Soviet assaults and stop them advancing through Városmajor Grange for seven weeks through a mixture of high morale and their unique skills.



The chapel building in Farkasréti Cemetery is assaulted by the Soviets

SCENARIO 12: FARKASRÉTI CEMETERY

Another unusual geographical feature which became a key part of the Buda defence line was the Farkasréti Cemetery. Translated as the “Wolfs Meadow”, part of the Axis perimeter was established here in the early days of the siege. The Soviets launched their initial assault on 13 January and only advanced 100–200 meters into the headstones. They were halted by a group of Hungarian Gendarmes and Vannay Battalion men who managed to hold on to the cemeteries north east corner. A counter-attack by the men of the 8th SS Cavalry Division recovered most of the cemetery. The companies of *Florian Geyer* then proceeded to dig themselves in and create a maze of positions amongst the opened up burial vaults and headstones. Some of the Divisions own Hetzers were joined by Hungarian Assault guns to support the approximately 1km line against a charge of Soviet Rifle Divisions 2–3km wide. The Waffen SS men were heavily outnumbered but had the firepower of a higher than normal amount of MG-42 machine guns, and the maze-like defensive positions amongst the crypts to help them in this very macabre battle.

FORCES

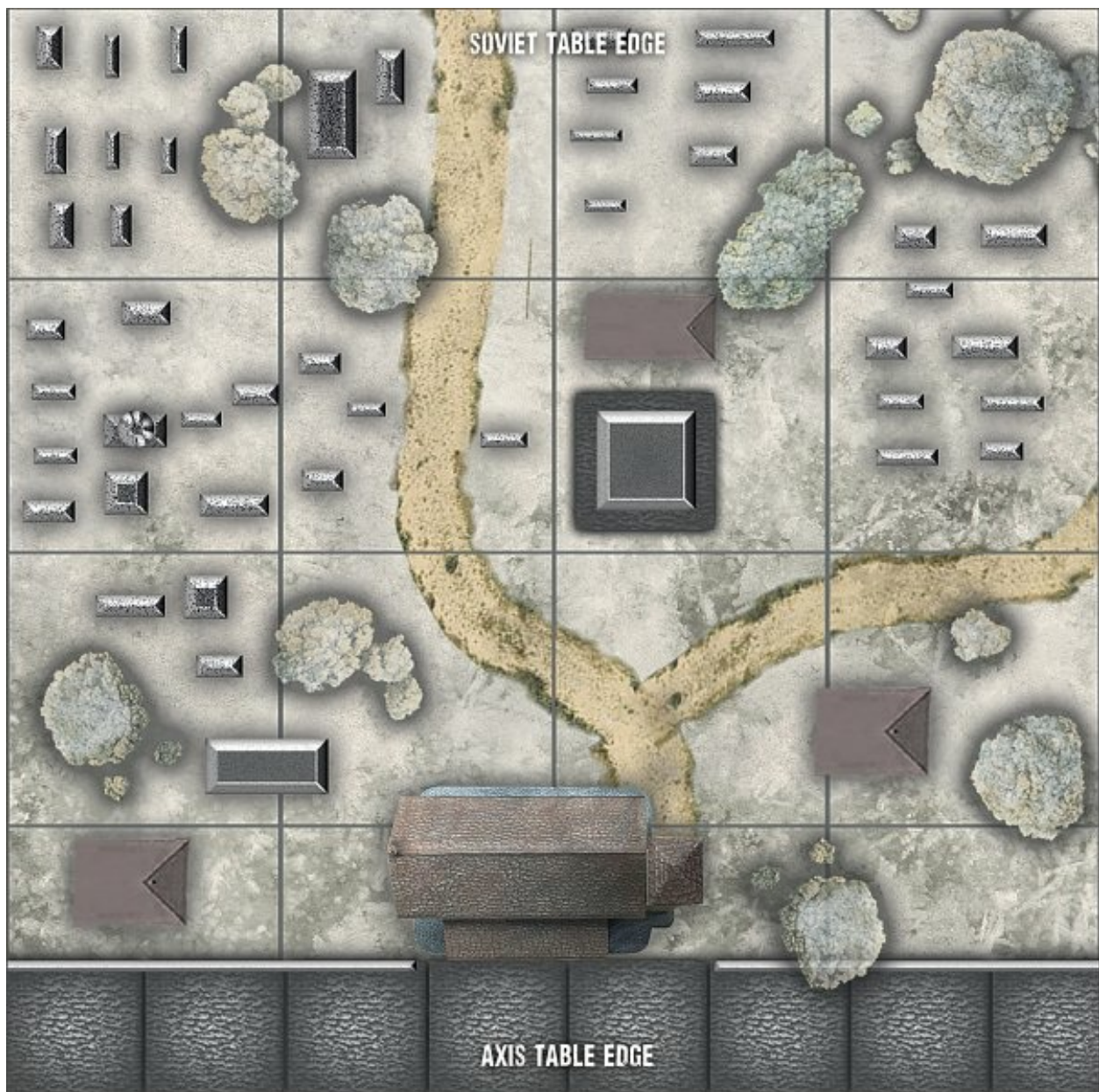
This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Soviet player is the attacker and has a reinforced platoon is chosen from either the Soviet *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#), or from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book. The Axis player chooses their force from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#). Infantry units in this force should be restricted to 8th SS Cavalry Division Squad, Hungarian Gendarmerie Battalion Section or Vannay Battalion Flying Squads.



Deadly close quarters fighting in Farkasréti Cemetery

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should consist of a graveyard, with rows of headstones, crypts, burial vaults, and paths winding in between. Some trees and light woods are also mixed throughout the Wolf's Meadow. There was also a large chapel building at the edge of the cemetery on the Axis side, that can be included if your terrain collection allows. The Axis and Soviet table edges are indicated as on the map. One player rolls a D6+1 to see how many objectives there are to be placed across the table. Once the number is determined, the players alternate placing each objective starting with the Axis player. The objectives must be placed anywhere on the table as long as they are over 12" from another objective already placed.



Scenario 12: Farkasréti Cemetery

DEPLOYMENT

No troops are deployed at the start of the game, at least half of both players forces (rounding up) must be formed into a first wave, this may be the entire force. The remainder of units are in reserve with the Soviet player declaring their reserve units first followed by the Axis player. Soviet units in a first wave may enter the table from their edge on turn one by being issued either an *Advance* or *Run* order, note that no test is required to enter the table as part of a first wave.

Soviet units in reserve may enter from their table edge or use the special deployment rules below. Axis units may enter the table in the first wave or reserve either by their own table edge or the special deployment rules below. No units on either side may outflank in this mission.

SPECIAL RULES

CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Be sure both players choose the appropriate number of assets from [here](#) to help form their strategies for this battle. Neither player may select the *Sewer Movement* asset.

MAZE-LIKE BATTLEFIELD

The fighting took place in a labyrinth of headstones and burial crypts. The Germans established hidden machine gun nests which ambushed the attackers, and the Soviets guided their reserves forward to exploit breakthroughs created with grenades and shovels. Axis Infantry or Artillery units in first wave or reserve may enter the table from any objective marker not held by an enemy unit. They can be directly deployed on top of an objective with a *Fire* or *Ambush* order, or *Advance* or *Run* on by simply measuring the distance from the objective marker. No units may assault the turn they arrive. Soviet Infantry or Artillery units in reserve may take advantage of these special deployment rules but may only deploy on objective markers that are held by the Soviet player and only units in reserve may be brought on from the objectives. To control an objective there must be a model from one of your infantry or artillery units within 3" of it at the end of its order, and there must be no enemy infantry or artillery units within 3" of it. Once you capture an objective, you hold it until the enemy captures it back. Any units in reserve on both sides may always elect to enter the table from their sides table edge as per normal.

OBJECTIVE

The Soviet assault must overrun the stubborn defenders dug into the cemetery to break open the Buda defence line. The Axis troops must hold the line against superior numbers for as long as possible.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, both players must move their entire first wave onto the table. Soviet units can enter the table from any point along their long

table edge and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Axis units may do the same entering from their table edge or make use of the special deployment rules above. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw! The objectives are worth 1 victory point each to whichever side controls them. The Axis players also receives one victory point for every enemy unit destroyed. The Soviet player receives one additional victory point per friendly unit that ends the game within 12” of the Axis table edge.



Soviet troops street fighting by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing. Taken from *Weapon 33: Soviet Submachine Guns of World War II*

AFTERMATH

The grim defence of Farkasréti Cemetery was not finally overcome until the last German machine gun nest was silenced nearly a month later on 7 February. Many of the fanatical SS Cavalrymen now found their own resting place amongst the graves they had used as fortifications. The Axis garrison, lacking the strength to counterattack, grudgingly withdrew, falling back to the redoubts of Gellért Hill and Castle Hill.

The siege had developed into the longest and bloodiest city fight since Stalingrad, and the Soviets sought to wage psychological warfare on the trapped Germans using its spectre. One leaflet dropped over the defenders read '*Die Schwarzen Raben fliegen aus Stalingrad*' (The black ravens are flying from Stalingrad). The morale of the German units did not drop, but the Hungarian units suffered a high rate of desertions, mainly because they did not view the Soviets as existential enemies.

SCENARIO 13: THE BUDA HILLS

Near the northern edge of the Farkasréti Cemetery the Soviets had advanced barely 100 meters by the end of January because of the defender's unconventional tactics using the unique terrain of Buda's hilly suburbs against the attackers. Many of the more affluent Budapest citizens, particularly in the wealthy villas, had large larders well provisioned with food and alcohol, making each a valued prize for which fierce fire fights broke out. The unique layout of the stand-alone villas of residential Buda led to a very unconventional new military tactic being used by the Axis defenders. They would first fall back and seemingly abandon one of these large villas and allow it to be captured by the Soviet infantry. Inside, large quantities of Schnapps and Palinka would have been conveniently left behind by the withdrawing German troops. The Germans and Hungarians would then wait for the early hours of the next morning to counterattack from the two villas on either side against the now intoxicated and sleepy Soviets. This checkerboard defence tactic was heresy to the higher German command but was extremely effective on the ground with open distances of 50m between each of these villas creating a trap for the advancing Red Army units.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Soviet player is the defender and chooses their reinforced platoon from either the Soviet *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#), or from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book. The Axis player is the attacker and chooses their force from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#).



The drunken Soviets emerge from their captured villa in the Buda Hills

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should consist of a large building in the centre of the table and one on either side of this on the middle line and up against the short table edges, these represent the villa houses. The space between the villas should be fairly open with fields, gardens and fences and the occasional clump of trees. The suburbs are built on the side of the hills, so you can add hills or slopes if you have them.



Scenario 13: The Budha Hills

DEPLOYMENT

The Soviet player is the defender and the Axis player the attacker. The Soviet player sets up all his units within 8" of the centre of the table. No units may be left in reserve. The Axis attacker's units are not set up on the table at the start of the game, they will all enter the table on turn one as part of a first wave. During turn 1 the Axis units must enter the table from any point along their table edge or the two neutral table edges on either side.

SPECIAL RULES

CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Be sure both players choose the appropriate number of assets from [here](#) to help form their strategies for this battle.

SPOILS OF WAR

The Soviet troops are besotted with looted alcohol and are slow to respond to the surprise Axis counter attack. All Soviet units start the game with D3 pins, roll for each unit separately at the start of the game.

DAWN ASSAULT

The Axis counter attack has been timed to catch the drunken Soviets off guard and occurs in the early morning hours. The Night Fighting rules from page 219 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook will be in effect. The type of game is Dawn Assault, so follow the rules for the Reduced Visibility being lifted from turn two on page 220 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

OBJECTIVE

The Axis forces have sprung their trap and must destroy the Soviet force and retake the villa. The Soviet force must fight off the surprise Axis counter attack and hold onto the villa long enough for reinforcements to arrive and hold their prize.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Axis player must move their entire first wave onto the table. The Axis units must enter the table from any point along their table edge or the two neutral table edges on either side. These units must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

The side which holds the building representing the villa at the end of the game is

the winner. To hold the building a player must have one of his infantry units inside the building and no enemy units inside on another floor. The building must be cleared of the enemy. If the building is destroyed during the course of the battle the game will be a draw.



Soviet squad in winter gear

AFTERMATH

The Soviets advanced slowly up through the hills of Buda's suburbs and suffered massive casualties, which meant by mid-January there was a chronic shortage of infantry. The Rifle Divisions had long since sent their 'cooks and clerks' into the vicious street fighting. The Hungarian and German defenders were also being decimated, but as their lines contracted their numbers were spread less thinly across the front. They were also able to enhance their equipment from taking from their dead comrades. The supplies found within the wealthy houses larders created a cruel contrast for the starving Axis troops, who were surviving on melted snow, horse flesh, and a thin soup, yet were well supplied with the finest liquor and cigars. Even with the innovative chequerboard tactics employed by the defenders, the villas of the Buda hills were taken one by one and the tiny bridgehead shrunk even further.



An unlucky German DFS 230 glider, carrying supplies, crashes into 31 Attila Road

SCENARIO 14: SUPPLY DROP

Hunger was a constant companion of the fighting men during the siege from the very outset of the encirclement. With the early loss of Ferihegy airport on 27 December, the supply situation during the siege became critical. Eighty tons of supplies per day were needed to sustain the garrison, let alone the civilians also trapped in the city. Re-supply efforts became a crucial factor for the Axis garrison to be able to continue fighting. Daily rations were reduced to five grams of lard, a slice of bread, and one piece of horse meat per man per day. Tragically, the twenty thousand cavalry horses of the 8th and 22nd SS Cavalry Divisions, whose men were fighting dismounted on the city streets, now provided a ready source of meat for the garrison. Lack of ammunition, especially for heavy weapons, had also been a crippling factor for the defenders. Hungarian and German howitzers were only allowed to use a handful of shells a day, and some mortar types had completely run out of rounds altogether.

The Luftwaffe made great efforts to support the garrison trapped in Budapest. Early in the siege, the horse racing track in Pest was converted into a makeshift airport where Ju-52s flew in food, ammunition, and fuel, and on their return flight evacuated the seriously wounded. One such lucky man being the son of Field Marshal Keitel. Soviet T-34's overran the racetrack on 9 January, and so two city parks were converted into emergency landing strips for gliders to make one-way trips into the stricken city, while the Junkers continued to drop canisters by parachute to the defenders in Buda, but these often drifted over Soviet lines.

The two remaining landing strips were Magrit island, a former playground of Budapest's citizens which was situated in the middle of the Danube, and the Vérmező (Blood Meadow), a seven-hundred-meter-long park below the ramparts of Castle Hill. Teenage pilots drawn from Hitler Youth flying clubs across Germany would attempt to land gliders in this narrow park, drawing murderous fire from Soviet Anti-aircraft and artillery. The supply canisters dropped by parachute were red for ammunition and those carrying food were white. Some contained odd items like Iron Crosses or yellow flags to mark unexploded artillery shells. As many of the resupply sorties had to be flown at

night these canisters often landed behind Soviet lines or in no-man's land, provoking savage little battles over each of them.



Vannay Battalion Flying Squad

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal forces. The Soviet player may choose their force from either the Soviet *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#), or the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book. The Axis player chooses their force from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should be a city park in the centre with a mix of light woods, open meadow and some ruins. The edge of the park can be depicted by using dense urban terrain around the sides; apartment blocks, buildings, ruins, rubble and streets. Now determine how many supply canisters there are scattered across the table. Roll a D3+3 and that is how many canisters there are to place. These are objective markers so if you don't have actual models of canisters, simply use a 40mm base or coin. Both players roll a die and the highest score gets to place the first canister. A canister can be placed anywhere on the table outside of 12" of any table edge or 12" of another canister already placed. Players alternate placing canister objective markers until they are all placed on the table. This scenario does not represent a particular battle but allows you to recreate any number of actions of this type. Indeed, the fight for each supply canister became its own desperate battle. You can replay this scenario multiple times and just rearrange the terrain and forces to give you a totally new scramble for supplies.

DEPLOYMENT

Both players roll a die. The player who rolls the highest, picks one of the long table edges as theirs, with the opponent taking the opposite long table edge. No units are set up on the table at the start of the game. Both sides must nominate at least half of their force to form their first wave. This can be their entire force if desired. The remainder of each player's forces are held in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must secure as many of the scattered supply canisters as possible, the garrison is at the limits of its endurance to hold out and any supplies will help sustain them. The Soviet player must prevent any supplies reaching the beleaguered defenders so the siege can end as soon as possible.

SPECIAL RULES

SUPPLY CANISTERS

The first time an infantry unit from either side moves to within 3" of each supply canister, halt the units move as they search the contents and make a roll on the chart below to see what they find. If the unit was making an *Advance* move, they must forgo their shooting to search the supply canister.



Scenario 14: Supply Drop

Supply Canister Table	
D6 Roll	Effect
1	The canister contains Iron Cross medals to raise the garrison's morale. No further effect
2-3	The canister contains food. This objective grants four victory points instead of two
4	The canister contains small arms ammunition. As long as the infantry unit remains within 3" of this objective they may re-roll all dice rolls of a one when rolling to hit when shooting with rifles, LMGs, SMGs, or pistols. This may only be used once per canister.
5	The canister contains panzerfaust launchers. The unit is now equipped with one panzerfaust per model in the unit up to a maximum of four. This is in addition to the unit's current equipment.
6	The canister contains medical supplies. This objective grants four victory points instead of two and the marker uses the rules for a medic on page 83 of the <i>Bolt Action</i> rulebook.

GLIDER CRASH

A glider crashes at the beginning of turn 4, before any players draw order dice.

Nominate one of the short table edges. On the roll of a 1, 2, or 3 the plane comes in on the nominated side. On the roll of 4, 5, or 6 it comes in on the opposite side. Roll 10d6 and add up the results. Measure that distance, in inches, from the determined side of the board. Place a crater at the centre of the impact point exactly 24" from both long table edges. Craters should be 5" in diameter. Of course, if you have a glider model place this, but use the marker for measuring to units it may damage or who controls this objective later.

Any unit under the crater when it lands counts as getting hit by a medium howitzer (having a crashing glider land on you hurts!). Any unit not under the crater but within 12" of the impact point (not the crater) must roll on the chart below.



8th SS Cavalry Division HQ

Glider Crash Table	
D6 Roll	Effect
1	The unit or vehicle sustains 1 pin
2-3	The unit or vehicle sustains 2 pins
4	The unit or vehicle sustains 3 pins
5	The unit or vehicle counts as though it is hit by a light howitzer in a building
6	The unit counts or vehicle as though it is hit by a medium howitzer in a building

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, both players must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along the player's long table edges, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a dice. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score two victory points for each supply canister they control at the end of the game, and six victory points if they control the crashed glider. To control the supply canisters or crashed glider the player must have one of the models from one of their Infantry or Artillery units within 3” of the marker and no enemy models within 3”. Note that these objectives must be controlled at the end of the game as these precious supplies need to be recovered!



Both sides fight savagely over a crashed German glider full of supplies

AFTERMATH

Despite Göring's boasts and promises that his Luftwaffe gliders and canister supply drops would sustain the garrison by an "aerial bridge", the supplies never peaked at more than 47 tonnes per day for the 80 tonnes actually needed. The most desperate and brave efforts in the aerial resupply mission were the Luftwaffe glider pilots who flew one-way trips into the besieged city. During late January and into February, 72 of these DFS-230 gliders attempted to land in Buda, guided in on the Vérmező with electric torches by Hungarian boys from the Budapest branch of the *Deutsche Jugend* (German Youth). The park was surrounded by high rise apartments and under Soviet artillery fire, so their chances were slim. Many gliders crashed into the buildings or were shelled as they landed, only 41 made it through the darkness, shelling and buildings. The sacrifice of these foolhardy glider pilots allowed the trapped garrison to hold out for a further two weeks.

On 5 February the last gliders landed on the Vérmező. Two German gliders landed successfully on the meadow, three more gliders crashed at the southern end of the park, and a sixth glider plummeted into the ruins of the Szarvas restaurant. The last met its end high up in the 6th floor attic of 31 Attila Road. In spite of these losses, some 97 tonnes of ammunition, 10 tonnes of fuel, and 28 tonnes of food was successfully landed. Although this would be the best air resupply to date, it would be the last. Despite the efforts of the glider pilots and the slaughter of 30,000 cavalry horses for rations along with the carrots that were meant to feed them, famine was an issue for the defenders by early February.

THE END IS NIGH

On 30 January, the twelfth and final, anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, the garrison command of IX SS Mountain Corps sent a grim message:

"Famine and disease are spreading. The people have lost all faith and hope... the situation is very critical. The last battle has begun."

On 6 February, following the annihilation of the German forces inside the Farkasréti Cemetery, the vital tactical height of Sashegy Hill was encircled and fell to the Soviets. A regiment of the 8th SS *Florian Geyer* supported by Hungarian Zrínyi assault guns were holding on to this important feature when the Red Army assaulted them from three sides and finally took the hill after six weeks of continuous fighting.

The defences of Buda were now fatally compromised with the Soviets possessing a vantage point from which their artillery observers could see over the entire Buda cauldron. Accurate fire was called in on the garrison's positions below them on Castle and Gellért Hills. The emergency landing strip on the Vérmező became unusable as it was now under constant bombardment. The last German and Hungarian artillery batteries were knocked out by the deadly accurate Soviet counter-battery shellfire. No one in the pocket was safe, everyone was an infantryman now. With all ammunition expended the men of the 8th SS Flak Battalion, who had received a special commendation from Guderian himself for shooting down seventy-five enemy aircraft during the siege, abandoned their guns and entered the battle as infantry. Sensing its doom, the last 25,000 defenders were now pushed back against the Danube into an area of approximately 2km by 600m.

By 4 February, the defensive perimeter in Buda had shrunk so much that the remaining Axis bridgehead was confined to an area of roughly only three-square kilometres. The literal gateway to the castle went through Széll-Kálmán Square. If the defences here could be overrun, it was less than 300 metres up through the cobblestone streets of the Castle District to the IX SS Mountain Corps command bunker, situated under the Royal Palace. In February 1945, this tiny strip of high ground was the final redoubt of the Axis defence in Budapest.

Despite the realisation that continuing to hold out was pointless and that there would be no relief, the Germans and Hungarians grimly held the area around Széll-Kálmán Square, which had proven to be a strong defensive position. The western perimeter bordered the Városmajor parklands which had been held by the Vannay Battalion until they were driven back through their three defensive lines into Széll-Kálmán Square.

SCENARIO 15: THE LAST REDOUBT

Lieutenant Horváth's 1st Company of the Vannay Battalion clung to street barricades within Széll-Kálmán Square as well as row houses facing it. The paramilitary unit had suffered huge losses being driven out of Városmajor Park but could now call on some heavy firepower to bolster their new defences. Lending their direct support was a battery of medium mortars as well as a pair of 100mm howitzers of the Hungarian 12th Reserve Infantry Division, emplaced in the square itself, which was the main terminus of the tram system in Buda. The Vannay men had fortified the block facing Krisztina Boulevard and had no plans to withdraw any further.

Towering over Széll-Kálmán Square was the castle-like Postal Palace building. It formed the linchpin of the Hungarian defence, and the Vannay machine gun platoon was deployed in its upper floors with a commanding view over the square below, while the men and boys of the understrength flying squads held the floors at street level. Experienced tank hunters hid themselves amongst the trams and debris strewn around the square. Favouring the outdoor positions to being within a building, due to the lethal backblast of their Panzerfaust and Panzerschreck launchers.

The Soviet assault force from the 297th Rifle Division had pursued the Vannay men through the park to this square. Being veterans of the street fighting in Pest, they were confident of victory. On the morning of the 4 February, four T-34/85 tanks from the 5th Guards Tank Corps, and a platoon of assault engineers from the 14th Assault Engineer Brigade were assigned to the riflemen to lead the attack into the square. Desperately short of warm bodies, the Soviet command had also allocated a platoon of Hungarian defectors from the Buda Volunteer Regiment to join in on the final assault. The defenders could not afford to give ground and prepared themselves to hold out with grim fanaticism.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be fought by equal forces. The Soviet player is the attacker and chooses their reinforced platoon from either the *Urban Assault Group* Theatre Selector [here](#), or from the *Operation Bagration* Theatre Selector

on page 84 of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book. The Hungarian player is the defender and chooses their force from the *Budapest Pocket Defenders* Theatre Selector [here](#). Although equal forces are chosen by the players, both sides receive certain extra units for free.

The Hungarians receive a regular Medium Howitzer (with no spotter) and a regular Forward Artillery Observer team of three men.

The Soviets receive a regular T-34/85 tank and a full-strength squad of the Buda Volunteer Regiment, Hungarian defectors to the Soviet side, see [here](#). If the Soviet player wishes he may instead field a full-strength Soviet Rifle squad.

The Axis force should consist of only Hungarian units, with a focus on Vannay Battalion Flying Squads and Arrow Cross Militia as the infantry sections (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The Hungarian force cannot include any vehicles.

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 4' x 4' gaming surface. Scenery should show the square itself in the centre, which while fairly open, is strewn with rubble, barricades, and the wrecked shells of the city's trams. The Hungarian table edge should feature high ground with several large buildings on it, to represent the Postal Palace building. The other three sides of the table should have a row of houses and streets entering the square as shown on the map. The Soviet players table edge is opposite to the Hungarian one as shown on the map. An objective marker is placed on Várfok Street, which leads up to the Royal palace on Castle hill as well as one on the Postal Palace building. Three more objectives are placed around Széll-Kálmán Square, one on each major barricade (as shown) and one on the gun emplacement of the howitzer battery.

DEPLOYMENT

The Soviet player declares at least half of his units to form the First Wave, this may be his entire force if desired. The remaining units are placed in reserve and may outflank. The Hungarian player now deploys all his forces anywhere within the square itself, which is up to 30" on from the Hungarian table edge and no closer than 6" to the two neutral table edges.

SPECIAL RULES

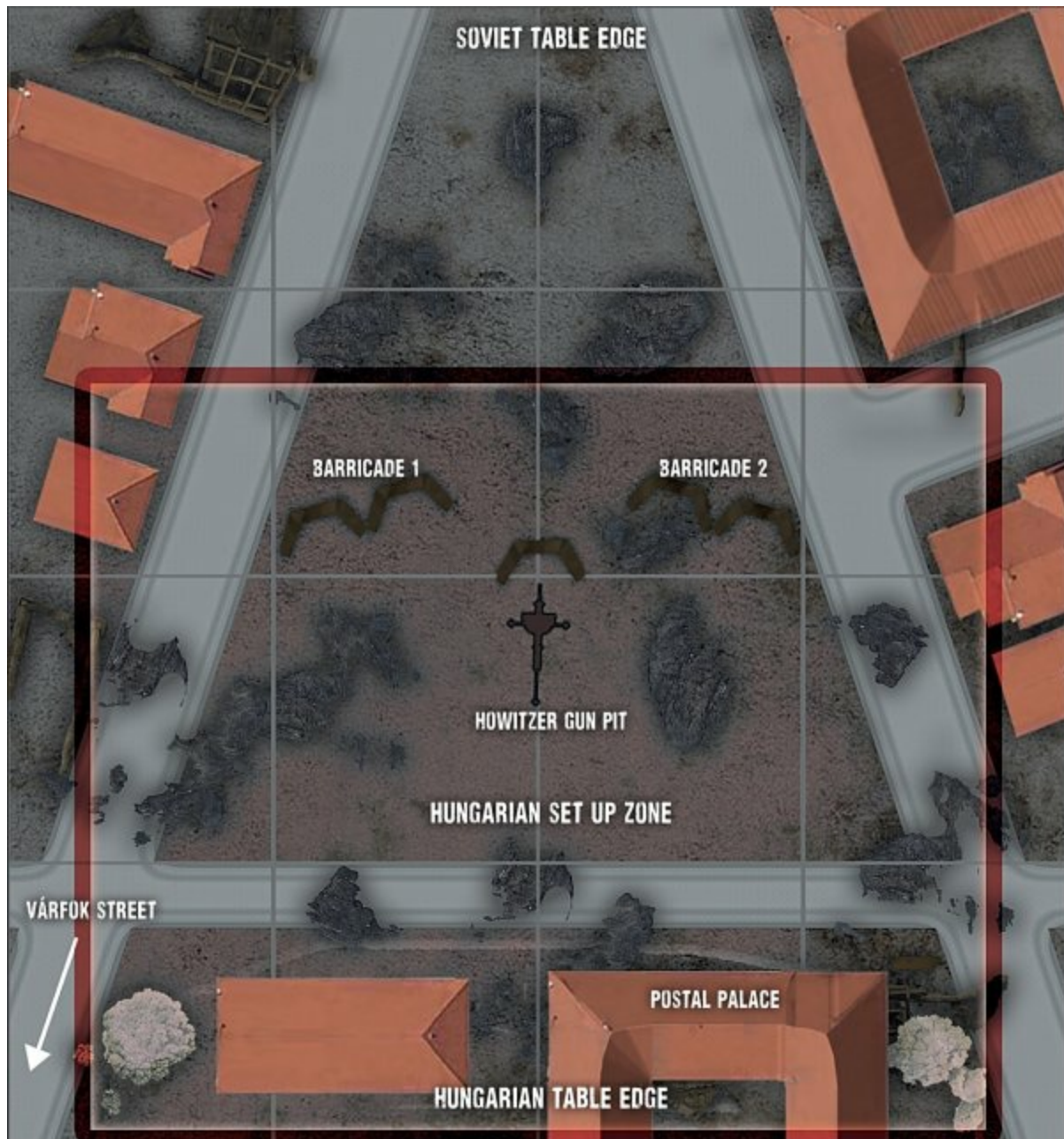
CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Be sure both players choose the appropriate number of assets from [here](#) to help form their strategies for this battle. The Axis player already has two assets which

are pre-selected for him: *Street Barricades* and *Fortified Building* (the Postal Palace).

HIDDEN SET-UP

All Hungarian units deployed at the start of the game benefit from the Hidden rule (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) if they are set up in cover. They may also begin the game in Ambush.



Scenario 15: The Last Redoubt

OBJECTIVE

The Soviet force must clear the square of resisting Hungarian defenders and open up the street for the final attack on the Axis HQ inside Castle Hill. The Hungarians must bar the entrance to the castle district at all costs.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Soviet player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along the Soviet player's table edge and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

Players score victory points for objectives they control at the end of the game. One victory point is awarded for each of the three objective markers in the square, two for the objective in the Postal Palace and three for the Várfok street objective. To control the objective markers a player must have one of the models from one of their infantry or artillery units within 3" of the marker and no enemy models within 3".

AFTERMATH

The barricade erected across Retek Street and Krisztina Boulevard did not hold back the Soviet attackers for long on 4 February. The T-34 tanks smashed through the barricade on Retek street and advanced into the square before the lead tank took a direct hit from one of the hidden Hungarian howitzers, blowing its entire turret off. The thinned ranks of the defenders could not hold the square against the Red Army and Hungarian defectors.

By day's end, the Soviets had gained a toehold along the north edge of Széll-Kálmán Square. The survivors of the Vannay Battalion were pushed back and even the Postal Palace was taken briefly by the Soviet storm group. The remaining Vannay men evacuated the building via an emergency exit from the underground air raid shelter. A desperate counter attack by an Arrow Cross detachment forced the Soviet infantry into the upper floors, so the Hungarians held the ground floors, holding open a potential breakout route on the corner of Széll-Kálmán Square. Even with the aid of the T-34's 85mm cannons, the Soviets were unable to dislodge the Hungarians from the office block.



Soviet Winter ZIS-2 anti-tank gun



The Hungarians defend Széll-Kálmán Square

THE BREAKOUT ATTEMPT

Gellért Hill, overlooking even the Royal Palace on Castle Hill was stormed and taken by the Soviet 83rd Marine Brigade on 10 February. All that now remained of the Axis bridgehead in Buda was the hilltop suburb of the Castle District itself. The garrison commander, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, had been unable to find the courage to allow his men to defy the Führer's orders and launch a break out earlier in the one-hundred-day battle. He had spent the entire siege underground in his bunker and had never once come out. Now, with the Soviet assault groups only a ten-minute climb away the grim reality set in even for him. A breakout operation was finally planned for the evening of 11 February which would include all men able to fight but leaving the wounded behind to the mercy of the Soviets. The plan was to use Russian-speaking men to infiltrate the forward Soviet positions in Széll-Kálmán and Széna squares, overwhelm the besiegers and from there the Axis garrison would attempt to reach the hills and forests northwest of the city. The nearest German lines were located 25km away.



Soviet armour supports the infantry assault teams in the ruins

The breakout would commence under cover of darkness at 20:00 on 11 February, against Hitler's orders. The German troops especially feared being taken captive by the Soviets, the SS men could expect immediate execution and the *Heer* and Hungarian *Honvéd* members fate was well known to involve slave labour in Siberian Gulags. Death in battle was a preferable choice for many and indeed no German garrison with a chance of breaking out ever surrendered to the Soviets during the war. A toxic mixture of fear and fanaticism amongst the desperate garrison led to a deluded sense of hope. General Schmidhuber, commander of the 13th Panzer Division told friends just hours before being killed in the breakout attempt:

"We won't let them trap us. The day after tomorrow we'll be sitting together again over a drink"

The Soviets had been suspecting a breakout would come soon and had established three defensive belts around the most likely route through Széll-Kálmán and Széna squares, manned by the 180th Guards Rifle Division and many supporting T-34 tanks. With all hope of relief gone and ammunition almost exhausted, the escapees formed themselves into three assault waves. For every soldier, there were at least two civilians attempting to escape as well. The first wave, made up of the remaining cavalry men of the 8th SS and the panzergrenadiers of the *Feldherrnhalle* Division, managed to gain a momentary surprise and broke through the lines of the 180th in desperate and savage close quarters fighting. The first wave's casualties were so enormous though, that the subsequent groups were too afraid to follow them into the point-blank firepower of the Soviet siege ring. They were still cowering in Széll-Kálmán and Széna squares at 22:00, where they suffered terribly under devastating Soviet artillery and rocket fire.

By midnight, the situation was eerily quiet at Széll-Kálmán Square, but it was the scene of a massacre. Lieutenant-Colonel Alajos Vajda, of the Hungarian 1st Armoured Division, described the scene in Széna and Széll-Kálmán squares:

"It was beyond the wildest flights of imagination. The squares were almost as light as day with the many tracer bullets, flare rockets, and searchlights. Shell after shell exploded. I am not exaggerating a bit if I write that there were mountains of dead bodies everywhere."

The breakout was a complete disaster for the Axis forces. Three German Divisional commanders were killed in the breakout, General Schmidhuber, commander of the 13th Panzer Division met his end on Retek Street after crossing Széll-Kálmán Square. Almost alongside him the commanders of the two SS Cavalry Divisions, *Brigadeführer* Zehender, of 22nd and Rumohr of the 8th chose to commit suicide instead of capture, after being severely wounded. Commander of the garrison, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, had undertaken a 4km subterranean journey through an underground culvert. His party included heavily armed SS men with *panzerfausts* and MG42s, but were terrorised in the water filled tunnels by Soviet search parties with flame throwers. They were eventually captured behind Soviet lines in a villa in Buda as they surfaced.

That same evening, while the desperate Axis troops were attempting to fight their way out of the trap, the leaders of the western Allied powers, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, were concluding negotiations with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin at the Yalta conference. The fate of Hungary and all of Eastern Europe's liberated territories was already determined.

Some 16,000 soldiers and civilians managed to escape the carnage in the city and reach the woods of the Pilis Hills. Those lucky ones who had made it through were hunted like animals as they trudged through deep snow in both small and large contingents. The Luftwaffe flew many sorties to drop food to the exhausted fugitives but little could be done to help them in their odyssey to reach friendly lines. Most were hunted down and rounded up by Soviet infantry in trucks. The first Axis soldiers safely reached German lines about 24 hours later and by 16 February 627 men had arrived, most in no physical state to be anything but casualties needing treatment. Others spent the entire spring and early summer in the forests hiding out until they knew for certain that the war had come to an end. The largest single group to escape Budapest was 300–400 *Feldherrnhalle* Panzergrenadiers, led by Lieutenant Helmut Wolff, who later confessed:

"I have nightmares every night because I am still alive."

The breakout from Budapest was one of the most futile operations of the entire Second World War. Of the approximately 43,900 German and Hungarian soldiers in Buda on 11 February, 17,000 would be killed and a further 22,350 would go into Soviet captivity. At most 3,000 men made it into

hiding in the hills, but by 17 February most of these men had been killed or captured, only 700 reached the German lines. A soldier had about a one in a hundred chance of making it to safety, but an almost four in ten chance of being killed during the breakout.



A Soviet T-34 crushes a street barricade in Buda

SACRIFICED FOR THE REICH

On the morning of 12 February, the Soviet troops cautiously began their advance through the apocalyptic scene of the breakout route into the Castle District. Over the next three days they rounded up the 5,000 Hungarian soldiers wandering about hallucinating from hunger and shell shock. They had stayed behind either because they missed the order to breakout or thought it pointless. Tragically, thousands of the Axis wounded were killed in a fire which broke out under the Royal Palace in the catacombs that had been set up as the main hospital. The siege of Budapest might not have been fought at all, if it wasn't for the insistence of Hitler, who alone wanted the city to be held to the last bullet. The Führer had decided to sacrifice Budapest to shield Vienna 160km to the west and protect the last strategic oil reserves of the Reich, however devastating the results.

The Soviets focus was on destroying the Reich, and the Hungarians, whose land had to be crossed to get there, would have accepted an armistice before the destruction of their capital city as they first proposed and Malinovsky offered during the siege. The common German soldier was given no option but to sacrifice, first their Hungarian allies and then themselves. The Siege of Budapest, which lasted 100 days, had turned into one of the most prolonged and bloody city battles of the war, only Stalingrad and Warsaw are close. The battle for Vienna lasted only 6 days and the fighting to take Berlin itself was concluded in 14 days. The Leningrad blockade lasted much longer and caused more than 1,000,000 civilian casualties but fighting never entered its streets.

TOP SECRET

BUDAPEST CAMPAIGN ARM SHIELD

Throughout the war the German armed forces had a practice of awarding arm shields to commemorate particularly tough campaigns (known as an *Ärmelschilde*). Worn on the upper left sleeve, these metal badges were awarded to veterans of the Narvik 1940, Cholm Pocket 1942, Crimea 1942, Demyansk 1942, Kuban Bridgehead 1943, and Lapland 1945 campaigns (although this last shield was only produced by British order post war for POWs).

There was in fact a design for a Budapest campaign arm shield drawn up by a Hungarian, Domonkos Laszlo at the request of Lt. Col Varihazy – and plans were apparently made to produce the

shield, however Lt. Col Varihazy's unit surrendered to the Russians when Pest fell. The design features a relief of the iconic Budapest parliament building with flames raging around it and Junkers aircraft flying low to drop supply cannisters to the trapped defenders by parachute.

Actual physical copies of these shields began turning up in flea markets in Budapest and online militaria markets around 2003, when an American craftsman created one based on the original illustrated design. The Budapest shield was only ever created on paper, so these pressed metal badges are indeed fakes. Because they are based on the original design from the time, they look very convincing to the unwary.



Budapest Campaign arm shield (author's collection)

OPERATION *SPRING* **AWAKENING**



In January 1945 Hitler began planning a new great offensive even as his forces were being pushed back in the Battle of the Bulge. In the Führer's mind he thought it critical to secure the last source of crude oil the Reich had, the Hungarian oil fields of Nagykanizsa, located southwest of Lake Balaton. With that fuel the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe forces would buy the imperilled Reich time while more *Wunderwaffe* were developed, and a separate peace achieved with the western allies. Due to a crippling aerial bombing campaign of the Germans synthetic oil facilities, 80% of the Reich's fuel was now coming from these Hungarian refineries, so Hitler's fears were not unfounded. However, the danger on Berlin's doorstep was again ignored by the Führer as he assigned the last strategic reserves the *Panzerwaffe* had to the south, instead defending the capital. As was becoming more common, Hitler's grandiose plans did not stop there. This new offensive in the south would not only secure the oil, it would also destroy the Soviet armies in Transdanubia and retake Budapest to create a bulwark protecting Vienna, defending the southern approaches to the Reich. All of this would be achieved by the 6th SS Panzer Army, less than a month after it's mauling in the Ardenne.

HITLER'S LAST GAMBLE

Based on Hitler's instructions the staffs of Army Group South, Army Detachment Balck, and the 6th Armoured Army drew up several plans for proposal. Code named *Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen* (Operation *Spring Awakening*), the plan chosen had two phases, the first being an attack launched from the north and south of Lake Balaton with the pincers driving toward the Danube and surrounding the Soviet forces in the Vertes Mountains and southern Transdanubia. Once the trapped Red Army formations had been destroyed or contained, the attacking pincers would pivot both north and south along the Danube for the second phase of the plan. The northern arm of the attack would swing up and follow the Danube toward Budapest, to re-garrison the city. The Southern pincer would do the opposite and head south along the Danube to link up with the German forces attacking up from the Balkans in support and destroy the Soviet and Bulgarian armies in southern Hungary. The date set for attack to begin was 6 March.

The 6th SS Panzer Army took weeks to begin being extracted from the Ardennes under allied air superiority and sent by rail to southern Hungary. Extensive measures were undertaken to hide its redeployment, its covered tanks moving by rail at night, and its commander, Sepp Dietrich, stayed behind in Berlin making sure he was seen everywhere and not moving to Hungary himself until 1 March.

Even so, by the second half of February, Soviet intelligence identified large German tank formations in western Hungary, and soon realized that preparations for a major offensive were underway. *Stavka* ordered Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian Front to begin building defences in depth in front of the most likely route of Axis attack. Using the experience gained at Kursk, the Soviet plan was to wear the panzers down with multiple lines of entrenched antitank artillery units and then counter attack with their own armoured forces once the German attack was exhausted. In what became known as the *Balaton Defensive Operation* Tolbukin's troops built and manned a defensive zone 25–30km deep and bristling with anti-tank ambush points over 83km of front in Lake Balaton area. The muddy, canal-crossed landscape was perfect defensive terrain at this time of

year and the 3rd Ukrainian Front constructed over 2,400km of trenches, laid 250,000 mines, and received extra guns from neighbouring fronts, meaning they had 5,535 guns with 1,178 of the powerful ZIS 3 divisional guns at their disposal. Despite these formidable preparations, the men in these defence lines would be on their own, as the Soviets had been planning an offensive, Operation *Vienna*, and no troops earmarked for this attack were to be released to help in this defence.



German Infantry squad in greatcoats

SCENARIO 16: DEATH RIDE OF THE PANZERS

The offensive suffered setbacks from the start as the spring thaw set in at the end of February and it poured with rain. The few approach roads to the Panzer Division's jump off points were choked with mud and vehicles. The delays were so serious it meant that movement which should have taken place under the cover of darkness was undertaken instead under the eyes of Soviet reconnaissance planes during daylight. In any case the Soviet command knew the panzers were coming and the men in the antitank nests were well prepared. The order for *Panzer Marsch!* Was given at 08:27 on 6 March, but due to the mud, the attack did not develop until the afternoon. Nevertheless, Hitler's vaunted SS men attacked.

FORCES

This scenario uses the Tank Wars rules and armoured platoon structure for the German force. The German player has a 50% point advantage over the Soviet player (e.g. 1,500pts of Germans versus 1,000pts of Soviets) The German armoured platoon is chosen from the *6th SS Panzer Army* Theatre Selector [here](#). The Soviet reinforced platoon is chosen from the *Anti-tank Strongpoint* Theatre Selector [here](#).

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface. This game will be played lengthways, with each sides table edge being the short sides. Scenery should be a rural countryside with a mixture of light woods, some hilly ground, a small stream with the occasional farmstead or house. Heavy snow should cover the fields. There should be some narrow earthen roads criss-crossing these fields but they are in poor condition and very muddy.

DEPLOYMENT

The German players entire force is designated as the First Wave and moves onto the table on the first turn. The Soviet player must now set up at least half their units in their deployment zone, which is up to 36" onto the table from their

edge, this is a short table edge chosen by them. These units use special hidden set up rules detailed below. The remainder of his forces are held in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). No units on either side may use the outflanking rules to deploy.

SPECIAL RULES

RECKLESS ATTACK

The 6th SS Panzer Army launched their offensive without proper reconnaissance into the teeth of 66 well prepared anti-tank strong points set up by the Tobulkin's 3rd Ukrainian Front in three successive belts. Instead of deploying his actual units' miniatures onto the table as normal, the Soviet player instead places a small token or piece of paper down to represent each. These tokens or paper pieces should be marked with corresponding numbers with units in the army list. For example, if the Soviet unit has twelve units in the army, create twelve tokens numbered 1–12 and have these same numbers noted next the units in the list. This will make it clear which unit is represented by each deployment token. Place them face down so only the Soviet player is aware of what token represents which unit in his army. These tokens can be placed anywhere inside the Soviet deployment zone. The tokens can be issued an Ambush order without revealing what they are, but all other orders mean the token is removed and the unit must deploy all its miniatures within 6" of where the token was. These hidden units are also revealed if the German player moves an infantry unit or recce vehicle within line of site if the token is placed in the open. If the token is in terrain or behind anything that gives it cover it is only revealed at 12" by a recce vehicle or infantry or artillery unit, or a vehicle within 6". The Soviet unit is then immediately deployed.



German Tiger I in winter camouflage

MUD AND SNOW

The roads are a quagmire and are affected by the deep mud rules [here](#). Note that this is still a road, so the movement distances rolled for on that table are still doubled for vehicles. The fields on either side of the road are covered in heavy snow and the rules for deep snow are to be used from [here](#).

OBJECTIVE

The German forces must break through the Soviet antitank defence lines and fight their way through to the Danube to begin the second phase of *Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen*. The men of the Red Army manning the anti-tank strong points must blunt the panzers attack and stop them in their tracks.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along the German player's short table edge and must be given either a *Run* or *Advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 7, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

If one side scores at least two more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw! The German player receives 2 victory points for every unit of theirs which ends the game within 12” of the Soviet players table edge. The Soviet player receives 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.



Scenario 16: Death Ride of the Panzers

AFTERMATH

The German gains on that first day were minimal. The ground apart from the sector assigned to the 1st SS was unsuitable for tanks, and even here the *Leibstandarte* men only advanced about 2km into the Soviet defensive system. The following day the attack resumed, but again failed to gather any momentum as Soviet counter attacks began to fall on the weaker units of the German force. 1st SS Panzer Corps managed to advance 6km into the maze of Red Army defences but no other units could break through, so all Soviet reserves were sent to deal with them. The Luftwaffe flew 330 sorties in support of the 6th SS Panzer Army who were able to advance 35km by 9 March. The Tiger II's of Schwere Panzer Abteilung 509 managed to destroy 20 giant Soviet ISU 152 Assault Guns on 12 March but even this was not enough to keep the attack moving as the town of Sarosd became the breakwater for the German offensive. At 21:30 on 15 March, Hitler authorised a regrouping of the Panzer Army for a new direction of attack, but it was too late. The next day the Red Army unleashed its own planned offensive, *Operation Vienna*, which swept the floundering Panzer forces before it.

Four of the most battle-hardened Waffen SS Panzer Divisions had been squandered in an ill-conceived offensive into well prepared Soviet anti-tank defences. Skilled manoeuvre warfare had been replaced with straightforward fanatical attempts to break through. Tactically the Red Army anti-tank nests had beaten back the Königstigers and Panthers by holding their fire until the panzers were within very close range. Several batteries of guns would then coordinate to catch the panzers in "fire bags" of concentrated fire from the sides. The mud and the well-designed Soviet defences meant the fighting devolved into an infantrymen's battle, an element that was crucially lacking in the 6th SS Panzer Army.

The highly proficient Soviets had also defeated Hitler's best divisions through superior strategy. Encouraging the Germans to attack the strongest part of the Soviet lines, they then launched counter attacks on the panzers flanks with their own carefully husbanded self-propelled guns and tanks. The pressure from these attacks and the unleashing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front's own Vienna offensive

one day later, on 16 March, drove the 6th SS Panzer Army back in disarray.

The once dreaded divisions *Leibstandarte* and *Das Reich* began their attack near Lake Balaton, aiming to reclaim Budapest, and ended it abandoning Vienna to the enemy after being pushed all the way back there by Tobulkin's relentless counter attack. The battles around Lake Balaton that fateful spring of 1945 were a decisive blow to the Reich. With the last strategic armoured reserves destroyed and the oil supply lost, there was now no force which could intervene to save Berlin in May. Vienna fell within a month of the failure of the last German offensive of the war. Less than three weeks later the war in Europe would be over.



A squad of 8th SS Cavalrymen clear a city block

GERMAN NEW UNITS



INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

INFANTRY

8TH SS CAVALRY DIVISION SQUAD

Raised in 1942, the 8th SS *Kavalriedivision 'Florian Geyer'* had a mixture of combat experience in the two years prior to the Hungarian campaign on security duties behind the lines as well as the front itself. Recruited from ethnic German populations in Romania and Yugoslavia, the unit was named 'Florian Geyer' in 1944 after a famous knight of the German Peasants War (1524–25). Having lost most of their horses in the battles on the Hungarian plain, they fought on foot in the rubble with great courage – any surviving horses providing much needed nourishment for the besieged defenders of Budapest. The men of the 8th SS famously defended Buda in the Farkasréti Cemetery, Sashegy Hill, and the Castle District.

An 8th SS Cavalry Division squad counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war German Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Germany* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	65pts (Regular) 80pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +13pts (Regular) or +16pts (Veteran) each - The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifles for +3pts each - The NCO and any other man can have assault rifles instead of rifles for +5pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 4 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts each
Special Rules	- Fanatics



8th SS Cavalry Division Squad

22ND SS CAVALRY DIVISION SQUAD

The newly raised *Freiwilligen* (volunteer) 22nd, SS *Kavalleriedivision* 'Maria Theresia' was made up of ethnic German Hungarian citizens formed around a core of veterans taken from the 8th SS *Kavalleriedivision*. After the German takeover of Hungary in March 1944 an agreement was signed allowing the SS to recruit within Hungary. Some recruits were eager and even transferred from the Hungarian army, while others were forcibly recruited from Volksdeutsche communities. The unit title 'Maria Theresia' came from the 18th Century Austro-Hungarian Empress. These cavalymen fought dismounted to defend the streets of Budapest itself, which many of them knew well, and received preferential treatment from the local civilians.

22nd SS Cavalry Division squad counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war German Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Germany* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +11pts (Regular) each - The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifles for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 2 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts each - The entire unit may become Fanatics at +3pts per man
	- Fanatics (if taken)

Special Rules	- Home ground: These troops are fighting to defend their homes and put their local knowledge to deadly effect, choosing the best defensive positions, laying ambushes and bringing up reserves on road networks they know well. This unit does not suffer the usual -1 on its roll to come on from reserve or outflank. In addition, if this unit is deploying on the table at the start of the game or in the first wave it may set up after all other units have deployed from both sides (but before Forward Deployers). It must set up within its normal deployment zone, but may begin the game Hidden and on Ambush if the controlling player wishes.
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LATE WAR REPLACEMENT SS SQUAD

By March 1945 the once feared SS Panzer Divisions of *Totenkopf*, *Das Reich*, the elite *Wiking*, *Hitlerjugend*, and competent *Hohenstaufen* had all had their ranks decimated by the bloody campaigns in Normandy, Holland, and the Ardennes. The Panzergrenadier units were being filled with barely trained replacements who lacked the skills to coordinate properly with the panzers they supported. This lack of knowledge stripped the Panzer Divisions of their main strength of being a deadly combined arms offensive force. However, there were just enough hardened veterans who survived amongst the ranks and NCO's to make these divisions dangerous, even if they were a shadow of their former selves.

A Late war replacements SS squad counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war German Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Germany* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	50pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +10pts Regular) each - The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifles for +3pts each - The NCO and any man can have assault rifles instead of rifles for +5pts each - Up to 2 men can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 4 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts each - The entire unit may become Fanatics at +3pts per man
Special Rules	- Replacements: The battle-hardened survivors of the once proud SS Panzer Divisions are now surrounded by barely trained replacements from the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine. The first time the unit suffers a casualty, roll a die. On a roll of a 1 the unit suffers an additional D6 pin markers and goes Down. On

	a 2–6 the unit fights on as normal. In addition, if the squad is reduced to two members or less it is upgraded to Veteran with morale 10. - Fanatics (If taken)
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German late war replacement squad

PANZER GRENADIER SQUAD

Like the panzers they supported, it was their mobility and firepower which characterised the Panzer Grenadiers. As the war dragged on and unsustainable losses in materiel mounted, the motorised infantrymen really became the backbone of the Panzer Divisions. The *Panzertruppen* often boasted twice the firepower of their footslogging comrades in the regular *Heer*, being lavishly equipped with two MG42 light machine guns per squad. The Panzer Grenadiers were called on to give close support to the tanks as well as hold the ground the panzers took. To keep pace with the armoured advance they were fully motorised. The first battalion of any division was equipped with armoured half-tracks and usually formed the spearhead, while the second battalion was mounted in soft skinned trucks. Whether riding directly into battle amongst the panzers or holding a defensive line to allow the tanks to counter attack, the hard fighting Panzer Grenadiers were always at the sharp end on every front the *Wehrmacht* fought. In the grim urban warfare of the siege of Budapest the Panzergrenadiers of the 13th Panzer Division and *Feldherrnhalle* Panzergrenadier Division became adept at building ad hoc street barricades and other fortifications. The largest group of Axis troops to survive the break out attempt was 600 men of Panzergrenadier Division *Feldherrnhalle*.

A Panzergrenadier squad counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war German Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Germany* supplement. Their use in any of the

new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	50pts (Regular) 65pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +10pts (regular) or +13pts (veteran) each - The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifles for +3pts each - The NCO and any other man can have assault rifles instead of rifles for +5pts each - Up to 2 men can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 4 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts each
Special Rules	- Motorised infantry: The Panzergrenadier squad can re-roll any failed order test that is required to mount or dismount a transport vehicle.



German Army Panzergrenadier Squad with Sd Kfz 251/1D

SS-PANZER PIONEER SQUAD

Just like their *Heer* counterparts, the SS *Sturm*pioneer were made up of specialist assault troops armed with flamethrowers, demolition charges, anti-tank mines and extra submachine guns. Their job as pioneers was to create gaps through the enemy fortifications using everything from explosive charges to picks and shovels. The SS Panzer Divisions mounted their Pioneers in Sd Kfz 251/7 *Pionierpanzerwagen* armoured half-tracks or the soft skinned *Maultier*. These mounted Panzer Pioneers performed a vital role in supporting the heavy tanks and allowing them to cross obstacles and bridge anti-tank ditches and destroyed bridges. Most importantly the SS Panzer Pioneers helped clear a path

through the deadly Soviet anti-tank minefields.

A SS Panzer Pioneer squad counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war German Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Germany* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	70pts (Regular) 85pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +14pts (regular) or +17pts (veteran) each - The NCO and up to 6 men can have submachine gun instead of rifles for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a flamethrower for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 4 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts each - The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man - The squad can be given mine clearing gear for +1pts per man
Special Rules	- Mine clearing gear: (If taken) Add +2 when clearing mines. - Fanatics - Motorised infantry: The Panzer Pioneer squad can re-roll any failed order test that is required to mount or dismount a transport vehicle.

VEHICLES

TANKS

POLIZEI M15/42 TANK (PZ KPFW M15/42 738(I))

The 12th Police Panzer Company had been formed for anti-partisan duties in the Balkans before it became embroiled in the battle for Budapest. This intended role meant they were equipped with repurposed Italian M15/42 tanks. The German designation for these vehicles was the Panzerkampfwagen M42 738(i), with the (i) meaning Italian. This was a most common type of Italian tank seized by the Germans following the September 1943 armistice, with around one hundred being employed. The M42s saw extensive service from late 1943 to May 1945 in the Balkans and on the Eastern Front, however they were criticized for their thin armour and lack of reliability. Twelve of these Italian tanks fought as part of the Budapest garrison forces but performed poorly. Hopelessly obsolete, the 12th *Panzer Polizei Kompanie* war diary records many of their tanks were simply rammed and flipped over by the Soviets in their much heavier T-34/85s. The burnt-out shells of these Italian fighting vehicles were a curious sight on the streets of the Hungarian capital at the end of the siege.

Polizei M15/42 Tanks can be taken as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook plus the Ant-partisan warfare Theatre Selector from *Armies of Germany*, as well as the Budapest Pocket Defenders Theatre Selector from this book.

Cost	116pts (Inexperienced), 145pts (Regular)
Weapons	1 turret-mounted light anti-tank gun with 2 co-axial MMGs and 2 hull-mounted MMGs.
Damage value	8+ (light tank)
Options	- Italian machine guns: This tank does not benefit from the Hitler's Buzzsaw special rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i> .



Hungarian forces during the Battle of Budapest by Darko Pavlovic © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Men at Arms 449: The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II.

HUNGARIAN NEW UNITS



INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

ARROW CROSS MILITIA SECTION

The Arrow Cross Party was a coalition of right wing Hungarian political parties that came to power in the coup of 20 October 1944. Their leader, Ferenc Szálasi, was installed by Hitler and within days he had an armed militia at his disposal. Many of the men were untrained and unruly, but this was offset by the many experienced officers and non-commissioned officers who transferred over from the regular army. The Arrow Cross Militia did not have a good military reputation and was despised by the local population they harassed and feared by the Jewish citizens they murdered. The Arrow Cross men had no illusions what would happen to them if they fell into Soviet hands however, and often fought with fatalistic zeal when surrounded.

An Arrow Cross Militia Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis*. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	25pts (Inexperienced)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +5pts (Inexperienced) each - The NCO and one other man can have submachine guns instead of a rifle for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts
Special Rules	- Shirkers - Fatalistic Zeal: In close quarters only, this unit counts as having the Fanatics special rule until that combat is resolved.



Hungarian Border Guards

ASSAULT PIONEER SECTION

Each Hungarian Infantry Division had a highly trained Engineering Battalion. These Utász (Pioneers) provided direct frontline support to the infantry when dealing with enemy obstacles such as minefields and barricades. Equipped with flamethrowers and anti-tank mines, in a desperate situation they could also deal with Soviet tanks. Inside the Budapest pocket, the Assault Pioneer units proved to be some of the hardest fighting of the defending Axis forces.

An Assault Pioneer Sections counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy* and the Axis supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	55pts (Regular) 70pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +11pts (Regular) or 14pts each (Veteran). - The NCO and up to 2 men can have a submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each. - Up to 2 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts each. - Up to 1 man can have a flame thrower instead of a rifle for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader. - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader. The light machine gun may be replaced by a German MG42 for +5pts. - Equip the entire squad with anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man. - Equip the entire squad with mine clearing gear for +1pts per man.
	- MG42: In the later stages of the war the Royal Hungarian Army was equipped with more and more German made small arms. This vastly improved the

Special Rules	infantry's ability to take on the Soviets in the desperate battles of 1944–45. The German made MG42 had a vastly superior rate of fire to the Hungarian MG30. To represent this the MG42 has its number of shots increased by 1. - Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken) - Motivated elite: This unit removes D2 pins rather than one for passing order tests. - Mine clearing gear: (if taken) Add +2 to their roll on the mine clearing chart when clearing minefields.
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BORDER GUARDS SECTION

The Border Guard, or *Határvadász*, Battalions were Hungary's first line of defence if invaded. Their primary role was to hold the strategic passes over the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania with the manpower of these units being locally recruited in the frontier regions. Although predominantly a light infantry force, specialist fortress companies existed and were often issued with flamethrowers to help in the defence of border passes and valleys. Their uniform boasted an embroidered symbol of the Turul, a mythical Hungarian bird of prey which was said to be a protector spirit. The Border Guard Battalions were supplemented with locally raised militia from the Székler Command. The Székely are the ethnic Hungarian people of Transylvania. These units suffered from mass desertions in the first days of fighting as many of these men were more concerned with protecting their own families from the invading armies.

A Border Guards Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy* and the Axis supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at 11pts each (Regular) - The NCO and up to 2 men can have a submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a flamethrower instead of a rifle for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Make the entire squad a Székely Guard unit at -3pts per model and apply the Shirkers special rule

Special Rules	- Shirkers (if taken) - Guardians of the Carpathians: The men of the Border Guard Battalions have grown up in the forests and hills of the Carpathian Mountains. Treat all woods (normally rough ground) as open ground for movement purposes. - Home ground: These troops are fighting to defend their homes and use their local knowledge to great effect, choosing the best defensive positions, laying ambushes and bringing up reserves on road networks they know well. This unit does not suffer the usual -1 on its roll to come on from reserve or outflank. In addition, if this unit is deploying on the table at the start of the game or in the first wave it may set up after all other units have deployed from both sides. It must set up within its normal deployment zone but may begin the game Hidden and on Ambush if the controlling player wishes.
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DANUBE FLOTILLA INFANTRY SECTION

The Royal Hungarian Honvéd River Forces were the landlocked nation of Hungary's equivalent of the navy. The force was divided into various flotillas based on the different rivers they were responsible for with the largest one being the Danube Flotilla, which had 109 officers, 302 NCO's, and about 1,000 men. The total River Forces numbering no more than 1,700 men. During the first years of the Second World War, the Danube Flotilla took part in the 1941 Yugoslavian Campaign, where it accompanied the Hungarian armoured forces as far as Belgrade. In March 1944 the only Hungarian unit to resist the German occupation was the 2nd Flotilla near Ujvidek. The River Forces main task was clearing mines from the Danube which had been dropped from the air by RAF Bomber Command. The men of the Danube Flotilla became caught up in the Budapest Cauldron when they were summoned back to the capital by Vice Admiral Horthy to provide loyal government troops in case of resistance to his plan to take Hungary out of the war on 15 October. After this failed attempt to leave the war, all Hungarian forces in the capital were deployed in its defence. So, it was that the sailors of the Danube Flotilla found themselves deployed as much needed infantry even during the siege, although this was not what they had trained for. The River Forces men were supported by the machines of the Assault Artillery in defence of the Grand Boulevard in Pest where they fought tenaciously but at high cost.

A Danube Flotilla infantry Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy* and the Axis supplement. Their use in

any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	35pts (Inexperienced)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +7pts (Inexperienced) each - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts - Up to 2 men can have an MG08 light machine gun for +5pts. Another man becomes the loader
Special Rules	- MG08: The crews of the ships took with them the MG08 machine guns from the boats. A cumbersome relic from the first world war this light machine gun has its shots reduced by one and can only be used with a Fire or Ambush order.

EXPERIENCED HONVÉD DIVISION SECTION

Although the majority of infantry forces fielded by the Royal Hungarian Army in 1944–45 were not combat hardened, there were some experienced units after 3 years of fighting on the Eastern Front. Infantry Divisions of the Hungarian First Army had recently fought in the defence of Galicia in early 1944, and would put their experience to good use, like the 25th Division at the Battle of Tordá and the 10th Division inside the Budapest pocket. A Hungarian rifle platoon was not as well trained in infantry tactics as their German comrades, nor did it possess their firepower. Although, with 3 sections of 13 men the Magyars did have an advantage in manpower, and the issuing of modern panzerfausts gave them a chance against Soviet tanks that their countrymen on the Don River in 1942 did not.

An experienced Honvéd Division Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the Hungarian late war Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.



Hungarian Honvéd Squad

Cost	50pts (Regular) 65pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +10pts (Regular) or 13pts each (Veteran) - The NCO and up to 3 men can have a submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 2 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader. The light machine gun may be replaced by a German MG42 for +5pts - Equip the entire squad with anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man
Special Rules	- MG42: In the later stages of the war the Royal Hungarian Army was equipped with more and more German made small arms. This vastly improved the infantry's ability to take on the Soviets in the desperate battles of 1944–45. The German made MG42 had a superior rate of fire to the Hungarian MG30. To represent this the MG42 has its number of shots increased by 1. - Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken).

GENDARMERIE BATTALION SECTION

The Hungarian Gendarmerie, known as *Csendőr*, were men who were responsible for the public safety and the maintenance of law and order in rural Hungary from its formation in 1881 until its dissolution at the end of the Second World War. With the outbreak of war and the reclamation of the lost territories in Transylvania, the force doubled in size to 22,000 men. Recruited from the regular army, the hopeful *Csendőr* had to pass a stringent selection process and their officers all attended the Ludovika Military Academy. Dispersed across Hungary in small garrisons of 5–15, larger cities boasted full battalions. The most distinctive feature of the *Csendőr*, whose uniform was nearly identical to that of army soldier, or *Honvéd*, was a large rooster feather plume affixed to

the left side of a black bowler hat. The plumage became so identified with the *Csendőrség* that they were often referred to as the “rooster feathers”. During the siege of Budapest, the Gendarmerie Battalions contributed some 2,000 men to the fighting plus numerous light armoured vehicles such as the Csaba armoured car and the Fiat-Ansaldo tankette. In both peace and war, the *Csendőrs* fulfilled their duties according to their motto “faithfully, honourably, valiantly”.

A Gendarmerie Battalion Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy* and the Axis supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	60pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +12pts (Regular) each. - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts. - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader.
Special Rules	- Faithfully, Honourably, Valiantly: The unit itself and any friendly infantry or artillery unit within 12” of the Gendarmerie unit re-rolls all failed morale checks that would otherwise see them removed from the table.

PARACHUTE ASSAULT SECTION

The 1st Hungarian Parachute Battalion was formed in 1940 with transportation provided by the national airline *Magyar Légiforgalmi R.t.* They saw their first combat experience against Yugoslavia in 1941 where they captured the Franz Josef Canal after some initial mishaps. The paratroopers did not see combat again until the 19 December 1944 when, as part of the elite Szent László Division, they were deployed as emergency troops to plug gaps in the Budapest defence rings. The Regiment suffered heavy losses but was praised in German Army despatches for its aggressive fighting spirit against overwhelming Soviet attacks. Even after the fall of Budapest the paratroopers, who were then incorporated into the elite Szent László Division, fought the Soviets all the way into Austria as they were pushed back, eventually surrendering to the Americans.

A Parachute Assault Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian

Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	78pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	The NCO is armed with an SMG, all others with Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +15pts (Veteran) each - Up to 4 men can have a submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 2 men can have a panzerfaust in addition to other weapon for +5pts - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader. The light machine gun may be replaced by a German MG42 for +5pts
Special Rules	- MG42: In the later stages of the war the Royal Hungarian Army was equipped with more and more German made small arms. This vastly improved the infantry's ability to take on the Soviets in the desperate battles of 1944–45. The German made MG42 had a vastly superior rate of fire to the Hungarian MG30. To represent this the MG42 has its number of shots increased by 1. - Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken) - Tough as old boots: The fighting spirit of the Magyar paratroopers was highly praised by their German allies. This unit rolls bonus attack dice when fighting at close quarters. For every three men fighting in the combat roll one extra die - so seven men would roll two extra dice, and ten men would roll three extra, and so on. This extra attack can be assumed to come from any of the men fighting. - Motivated elite: When the unit successfully passes an orders check, remove D2 pins rather than the usual 1.



Lieutenant Horváth's 1st Company of the Vannay Battalion man their street barricades

REPLACEMENT HONVÉD DIVISION SECTION

To defend the Kingdom of Hungary from the relentless advance of the Soviets,

the 2nd and 3rd Armies were mobilised on 30 August 1944. These two Field Armies consisted of undermanned and under equipped Replacement Divisions. These infantry units lacked the number of heavy weapons and the assigned Assault Artillery Battalion that the more experienced Infantry Divisions already fighting had. The men of the 2nd Army were sent to be attached to German Army Group Fritter-Pico, where they fought well at Debrecen before being all but destroyed on the approaches to Budapest. The survivors were rolled into the 3rd Army which had mobilised at the same time and had just been badly mauled at Arad in Transylvania. Despite this, the 3rd Army fought on in the siege of Budapest and even beyond. It ended the war in Austria after fighting its way there from the west of Budapest facing the onslaught of the Soviet 46th Army all the way.

A Replacement Honvéd Division Sections counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	35pts (Inexperienced)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 8 additional men with rifles at +7pts each (inexperienced) - The NCO can have a submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts - Up to 1 man can have a panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Equip the entire squad with anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man
Special Rules	- Green - Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)

UNIVERSITY ASSAULT BATTALION SECTION

This was the only special unit that was officially added to the Royal Hungarian Army order of battle as the *Royal Hungarian 1 Honvéd University Assault Battalion*. The 500 or so young students that came from Budapest's universities shared a strong hatred for Communism and wanted to fight to defend their city from it. This unit was given *Honvéd* uniforms and led by junior officers transferred over from the army. 12 of the students were above the rank of private and formed its small officer corps. The University Assault Battalion fought

exclusively in Buda and was one of the first units to face the Soviets in the city's streets on Christmas eve 1944.

A University Assault Battalion Section counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	50pts (Inexperienced)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +10pts (Inexperienced) each - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader
Special Rules	- Green - Fanatics

VANNAY BATTALION FLYING SQUAD

The Hungarian Royal Vannay Flying Squad Battalion was formed on 22 December 1944, reporting a strength of 638 men. This special unit had been set up by the right-wing rogue Major László Vannay and he recruited his men from fellow veterans of the First World War. In particular he chose men from Budapest's municipal workers. Their intimate knowledge of the city and its many tunnels and culverts gave this unit a unique edge in the urban fighting of the 3-month siege. Another unique feature of this unit was the younger recruits aged between 15–18 were teamed up in pairs with the older men in a system known as 'Uncles and Pups'. The experience of the older veterans helped to keep the young volunteers alive. The flying squads of the Vannay Battalion fought hard in Pest and held the line protecting Buda Castle right to the end.

A Vannay Battalion Flying Squad counts as infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	65pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles

Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +13pts (Regular) each - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts
Special Rules	- Fanatics - Uncles and Pups: The older veterans of the First World War were tasked with looking out for the Battalions young volunteers. The first time the unit suffers a casualty roll a die. On a roll of a 1 the unit is immediately rated down to Inexperienced with morale value 8 for the rest of the battle. There is no further effect. - Home ground: These troops are fighting in the streets of their home city and use their local knowledge to great effect, choosing the best defensive positions, laying ambushes and bringing up reserves on road networks they know well. This unit does not suffer the usual -1 on its roll to come on from reserve or outflank. In addition, if this unit is deploying on the table at the start of the game or in the first wave it may set up after all other units have deployed from both sides. It must set up within its normal deployment zone, or within 12" of the players table edge if there isn't one. The unit may also begin the game Hidden and on Ambush if the controlling player wishes. - Municipal workers: Recruited from the men of the various city works, the men of the Vannay Battalion have intimate knowledge of Budapest's tunnels, culverts and sewers. This unit suffers a -1 to their order test to deploy using sewer movement (see here) rather than the usual -2.



Vannay Battalion Flying Squad

44M PÁNCÉLRÉM ROCKET LAUNCHER

The heavy Soviet tanks encountered by the Royal Hungarian Army in 1942 showed how helpless the Honvéd infantry were with their current anti-tank weapons. In response the Naval Architecture Department of the Military Engineering Institute developed two types of anti-tank rocket launchers, Hungary being the third nation to do so behind the US and Germany. The first

was the 215mm 44M Buzogányvető ‘mace thrower’ and the second was the 60mm 44m Páncélrém ‘tank terror’. Several hundred of these portable anti-tank weapons were manufactured in Hungary during 1944, with the shortfall in production being filled by purchases of panzerschrecks from Germany. The Páncélrém had a smaller calibre than its German counterpart being only 60mm like the American Bazooka. Having a practical range of 150 meters the Hungarian version traded a slightly improved anti-personal blast capability for less armour penetration with its smaller calibre.

The 44M Páncélrém rocket launcher counts as an infantry team weapon in the anti-tank allocation for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an antitank option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	42pts (Inexperienced), 60pts (Regular), 78pts (Veteran)
Composition	2 men
Weapons	1 Pancelrem Rocket launcher (counts as a Bazooka)
Special Rules	- Team - Shaped charge



Hungarian 44M Páncélrém Rocket Launcher team

ARTILLERY

43M SOROZATVETŐ

In 1943 the Hungarians purchased the license to manufacture the German 150mm Nebelwerfer 41. Known as the 43M Sorozatvető (sequential launcher) it was a six barrelled rocket launcher, mounted on a PaK 36 carriage. This devastating weapon helped the Royal Hungarian Army modernise in the later phase of the war against the Soviets, first appearing in the winter of 1943. This weapon system featured in battles on the Great Hungarian Plain of 1944, where the terrain was particularly favourable for its use.

43M Sorozatvető counts as artillery for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	52pts (Inexperienced), 65pts (Regular), 78pts (Veteran)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 Heavy mortar
Special Rules	- Fixed - Team Weapon - Multi Launcher

44M BUZOGÁNYVETŐ ROCKET LAUNCHER

Roughly translated as the ‘mace-thrower’, the 44M Buzogányvető was a prototype rocket weapon designed towards the end of the war. The dual unguided rockets were mounted on either captured and converted Soviet Maxim MG wheeled carriages, or a custom tripod. Of the 600–700 rocket launchers produced by the VM factory, the majority were used for the defence of Budapest in late December 1944. The small gun carriage and short range anti-armour capabilities made it particularly suited to the urban warfare of the siege. A large blast shield protected the operator from the weapon’s own back blast. Tests on captured IS2 ‘Stalin’ tanks showed its HEAT anti-armour warhead was able to penetrate up to 300mm of armour at 1200m. An anti-personnel HE warhead was also designed, named Zápor or ‘rainfall’.

The 44M Buzogányvető rocket launcher counts as an artillery unit for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an artillery unit in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	96pts (Inexperienced), 120pts (Regular)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 Rocket launcher
Special Rules	- Fixed - Team - Shaped charge - Two-rocket salvo: The weapon has two ammunition types, and has the below profiles. Declare which profile you are using before firing. You must load two rockets of the same type, so the following shot will need to use the same profile. Then, you can start the process again, for the second rocket. - Buzogány (mace): Range: (36") Shots: 1 Pen: +7 - Zápor (rainfall): Range: (36") Shots: 1 Pen: HE (3") - Small carriage: The weapon system was actually mounted on captured Soviet Maxim machine gun carriages. As such, the weapon was too small to tow behind a vehicle. The crew and weapon are instead counted as infantry when being transported, taking up 6 transport slots inside a vehicle. The crew may move the weapon up to 6" when given a <i>Run</i> order, even over rough ground.

80MM 29/38M HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN

Closely related to the German 88mm Flak 18/36/37/41, this anti-aircraft gun manufactured in Hungary under licence from Swedish firm Bofors. Initially used by Hungarian forces to engage high altitude enemy aircraft, in the desperate battles of the Hungarian plain this gun was often deployed to take on Soviet tanks. For the Hungarian crews this was an even more deadly job as their weapon lacked the protective gunshield of its German cousin, the 88.

The 80mm 29/38M Heavy Anti-aircraft gun counts as artillery for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	88pts (Inexperienced), 110pts (Regular), 132pts (Veteran)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 Platform mounted heavy anti-tank gun

Special Rules

- Fixed
- Team Weapon
- Flak
- Turntable

VEHICLES

TANKS AND TANK DESTROYERS

JAGDPANZER 38(T) HETZER

The Royal Hungarian Army received 101 Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer tank hunters in 1944–45. Some 75 of this number were imported from Germany to equip Hungary's new Assault Artillery units, with the 16th, 20th, and 25th Assault Gun Battalions using these machines. The Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division had its knocked out Turán tanks replaced with Hetzers directly from Wehrmacht units while in the line facing the Soviet *Bagration* offensive. Many of the Hetzers from the three Assault Gun Battalions found themselves fighting on the streets of Budapest as part of the ad hoc Group Billnitzer, as a mobile reserve. The highly motivated elite crews of the Assault Artillery branch put these deadly tank hunters to good use against the Soviets.

The Hetzer counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	210pts (Regular), 252pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 hull-mounted forward facing heavy anti-tank gun and 1 MMG with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Special Rules	- Hitler's buzzsaw: The MMG on this vehicle follows the rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i>. - Weak side armour: The Hetzer's weak side armour means that all shots to the side of the vehicle count as to the rear (i.e. they have a +2 penetration modifier rather than +1)



Hetzer of the 16th Assault Artillery Battalion

PANZER IV AUSF G AND H

The Hungarian 2nd Armoured Field Division received 74 of the latest versions of the Panzer IV, the Ausf. G and H, in 1944. The deadly KwK 40 L/48 cannon mounted in their turrets gave the Hungarian tank crews some much needed capability to deal with the heavy Soviet tanks they now faced. The Panzer IV served alongside the Hungarian made Turán II in the heavy companies of the tank battalions.

The Panzer IV counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	235pts (Regular), 282pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret-mounted heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and 1 forward facing hull-mounted MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Options	- May have Schürzen armour skirts for +10pts.
Special Rules	- Hitler's buzzsaw: The MMGs on this tank follows the rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i> . - Schürzen (if taken): Anti-tank rifles and shaped charges never get the +1 penetration bonus for hitting the vehicle on the side.

PANZER V PANTHER

The Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division received five Panther Ausf A tanks from

Germany in July 1944, these were originally destined for Romania but the former allies about face meant they were given to the *Honvéd* instead. These Panthers were welcomed into the 2nd Company, 1st Battalion of the 3rd Armoured Regiment. Led by Hungarian tank ace Ervin Tarczay, the Panthers fought in the vicious battle of Tordá, where they performed well. Between the 15 September and 6 October, the Panther squadron destroyed 11 Soviet tanks, 17 anti-tank guns, knocked out 20 machine gun nests, and drove back two companies of enemy infantry. Tarczay himself was responsible for five of those tank kills. After the fall of Tordá, Hungary's Panthers found themselves making a fighting withdrawal north west toward Budapest. Again, expertly led by Lieutenant Tarczay, the Panther's powerful 75mm cannon knocked out a further 16 Soviet tanks and crushed anti-tank gun lines, literally under their tracks. Eventually all five Panthers were knocked out and had to be replaced with Panzer IV's in early 1945.

The Panzer V Panther counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	355pts (Regular), 426pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret mounted super-heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and 1 forward facing hull-mounted MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Options	- May have a pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts.
Special Rules	- Tiger Fear (See page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i>) - Hitler's buzzsaw: The MMGs on this tank follows the rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i>. - The Panther's heavy frontal armour was comparable to that of some much heavier tanks, so against all shots coming from the front of the vehicle it counts its damage value as 10+.



Panther tank of the Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division

STUG III AUSF. G

To bolster the new Hungarian Assault Artillery formations being built in 1944 Germany supplied fifty *Sturmgeschütz* III Ausf. G. It had been planned to equip all assault gun forces with the native designed and built Zrínyi, but slow production and allied air raids on the factories meant the short fall was made up with German made StuG and Hetzer tank hunters. The StuG G was used by the Hungarians to equip their 7th and 25th Assault Gun Battalions. The 7th used their German built machines to deadly effect in September 1944 where their 2nd Battery knocked out twelve Soviet T-34 tanks in a counter-attack on the Transylvanian border. This Battalion fought on in the battles for the Tisza River where it went on to destroy a further 67 tanks before being withdrawn to the streets of Budapest and fighting as part of Group Billnitzer, where the unit met its end in the cauldron.

The Stug III Ausf G counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	230pts (Regular), 276pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 casement-mounted forward facing heavy anti-tank gun and 1 MMG with 360 degree arc of fire
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)

Options	- May have Schürzen armour skirts for +10pts.
Special Rules	- Hitler's buzzsaw: The MMG on this vehicle follows the rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i> . - Schürzen (if taken): Anti-tank rifles and shaped charges never get the +1 penetration bonus for hitting the vehicle on the side.

TIGER I

In May of 1944, Germany's 503rd Heavy Panzer Battalion handed over thirteen of its remaining Tiger I Ausf. E heavy tanks to the Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division directly in the combat zone in Galicia. The veteran German tankers were being re-equipped with the new *Königstiger*, but provided training teams to pass on their experience, and help the Hungarian crews learn how to fight with, and maintain, their 'new' Tiger tanks. This training was extensive and last from 20 April to 14 May 1944. Issued to the 1st Battalion's 3rd Company of the Hungarian 2nd Armoured Division, the Tigers were split between 1st Lieutenant Ervin Tarczay's 2nd squadron and Captain János Vedress' 3rd Squadron. As part of the 2nd Armoured Division they screened the withdrawal of the 1st Hungarian Army during the Soviets July offensive. Fighting hard in the Carpathian Mountains, on the very frontier of Hungary itself, one Hungarian Tiger halted a Soviet column near the town of Nadworna, destroying 8 tanks, many trucks and several guns. The gunner of this Tiger, Private István Lavrencsik, was awarded the Hungarian Gold Medal for Bravery. Two other Tigers destroyed 14 Soviet tanks in less than 30 minutes during the retreat through the mountains. The six remaining operational Hungarian Tigers were withdrawn and sent south to secure the border with Romania in Transylvania in September, fighting until they were all eventually knocked out.

The Tiger I counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	395pts (Regular), 474pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret mounted super-heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and 1 forward facing hull-mounted MMG
Damage value	10+ (heavy tank)
Options	- May have a pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts
	- Tiger Fear (See page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i>)

Special Rules	- Hitler's buzzsaw: The MMGs on this tank follows the rule on page 17 of <i>Armies of Germany</i> .
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43M ZRÍNYI II

This Hungarian designed and manufactured Assault Howitzer was ordered into production in January 1943 by the Hungarian General Staff to give the Infantry Divisions their own armoured support like the German's employment of the StuG. The Zrínyi II was based on two readily available pieces of Hungarian hardware, a widened Turán tank chassis and the 40M 105 mm howitzer. The frontal armour was 75mm thick and the howitzer was placed in the hull in a massive ball mount rather than a turret. This produced a stout, well armoured gun platform with a low profile. The Zrínyi II had a crew of 4 who used five 43M periscopes to see out of the fighting compartment. Plans for a pintle mounted AA defence machine gun did not come to fruition, so the crew carried submachine guns and grenades for close defence. Two types of ammunition were carried for the howitzer: the 38/33M high explosive shell and the 42M Anti-tank round to deal with the threat of Soviet armour. Of the 52 rounds carried in the Zrínyi II, 16 were this new HEAT ammunition. Crews often loaded up to 90 rounds inside their vehicles. In summer 1944 Hungarians began fitting their assault guns with sheets of spaced armour much like the German Schürzen. The 72 Zrínyi II which ended up being manufactured before the destruction of the Hungarian factories equipped the 1st and 10th Assault Artillery Battalions.

The Zrínyi II counts as a tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any of the late war Hungarian Theatre Selectors in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	180pts (Regular), 217pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 hull-mounted forward-facing Medium Howitzer
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Options	- May have 'Thoma' spaced armour for +10pts - May upgrade to having 1942M HEAT ammunition for +10pts
Special Rules	- Spaced Armour (if taken): Anti-tank rifles and shaped charges never get the +1 penetration bonus for hitting the vehicle on the side. - 1942M HEAT ammunition (if taken): The Zrínyi II can be equipped with armour piercing ammunition, allowing it to fire its medium howitzer as a medium anti-

tank gun for +10pts



StuG G of the 7th Assault Artillery Battalion

SOVIET NEW UNITS



INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

INFANTRY

MOUNTED RECONNAISSANCE SQUAD

The men of the *Rota Razvedki* (Reconnaissance Company) units lead the way ahead of the main armoured spearheads, riding into battle in armoured transports. As well as being fast moving, these squads were well armed with a mixture of rifles, light machine guns, submachine guns and even flame throwers to help them deal with any Axis defence. If the reconnaissance force came up against a particular stubborn enemy, they would simply bypass the defenders and identify them to the main force. These scouting infantry were mounted in armoured transports provided through the Lend-Lease agreements with the US and Great Britain. Whether mounted in an American made M3 Scout Car or halftrack, or a Universal Carrier – these vehicles provide protection, speed, and deadly firepower to help them in their task.

A Mounted Reconnaissance squad counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in any of the Soviet Theatre Selectors from 1943 on in the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement. Their use in any of the new Theatre Selectors in this book is already highlighted.

Cost	50pts (Regular) 65pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 3 additional men with rifles at +10pts (Regular) or +13pts (Veteran) each - The NCO and any other man can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a flamethrower for +20pts. Another soldier acts as loader
Special Rules	- Mounted Recon: The first time this unit dismounts their transport vehicle in a game, the player may elect to leave up to two squad members behind to man the transport vehicle's weapons for the rest of the game. These models are removed from the game and cannot re-join their unit later. Each squad member left behind to man the transports guns allows one weapon to be fired in addition

to the usual one otherwise allowed for an empty transport.



Soviet Lend-Lease 75mm Sherman

BUDA VOLUNTEER REGIMENT SECTION

The Volunteer Regiment of Buda was a unit recruited from Hungarian prisoners of war to fight for the Red Army during the siege of Budapest. Having deserted the Axis cause, these men volunteered not so much out of any communist sympathies, but because they fancied their chances to be better within this unit versus the thought of a Gulag in Siberia, if they even made it that far. Many of the men were also angry with the Germans for the callous destruction of their city, the pearl of the Danube. Soviet command welcomed the extra infantry and often assigned them to the toughest parts of the line and of the roughly 2,500 men who fought in the regiment, approximately 600 were killed in action at Budapest. The men wore Hungarian uniforms with red armbands made from German parachute silk tied around one arm to mark them as friendly troops to the Russians. For their hard fighting in the final stage of the siege, the Hungarians were allowed to raise their own flag alongside the Soviet one over the Royal Palace in victory. The presence of the Hungarians fighting on the Soviet side helped shorten the siege as they persuaded many other Hungarian soldiers to defect and prevented many acts of violence against the population.

A Buda Volunteer Regiment squad counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also

be taken as an additional infantry squad option in the Urban Assault Group, and Operation Bagration Theatre Selectors from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement.

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +11pts (Regular) each - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader
Special Rules	- Home ground: These troops are fighting in the streets of their home city and use their local knowledge to great effect, choosing the best defensive positions, laying ambushes, and bringing up reserves on road networks they know well. This unit does not suffer the usual -1 on its roll to come on from reserve or outflank. In addition, if this unit is deploying on the table at the start of the game or in the first wave it may set up after all other units have deployed from both sides. It must set up within its normal deployment zone, or within 12" of the player's table edge if there isn't one. The unit may also begin the game Hidden and on Ambush if the controlling player wishes.

VEHICLES

TANKS

LEND-LEASE M4A2 75MM SHERMAN

Several of the Guards Mechanised Corps which led the Soviet offensive into Hungary were primarily equipped with Lend-Lease equipment, their main tank being the M4A2 75mm Sherman. The Soviet crews enjoyed the reliability of the vehicle and extra space inside the fighting compartment compared with the T-34, but were aware of its much higher centre of gravity and the threat of it overturning. The main guns gyro stabilizer also posed problems for the Soviet crews. The Red Army tanker's nickname for the M4 medium tank was Emcha because the open-topped figure 4 resembled the Cyrillic letter che or cha (Ч). Under Lend-Lease 2,007 Shermans with the 75mm main gun were sent to the USSR by American factories. These 75mm armed Shermans took part in the swirling tank battles on the Hungarian plain around Debrecen.

A Lend-Lease 75mm Sherman counts as tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any late war Theatre Selectors from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement.

Cost	205pts (Regular), 254pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret-mounted medium anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and forward-facing hull-mounted MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Options	- May add a pintle-mounted HMG on the turret for +25pts
Special Rules	- 75mm) HE (2"): Instead of using the 1" template, use the 2" template

LEND-LEASE M4 76MM SHERMAN

In November 1944 the Guards Mechanised Corps in Hungary which were equipped with the 75mm Shermans were rested and equipped with the M4A2(76)W. These were newer, 76mm armed Shermans which benefited from wet stowage. The more powerful main gun and larger turret hatches were very popular with the Soviet crews. A total of 1,594 M4A2(76)W were manufactured in America between May 1944 and Dec 1944, with almost the entire production run being shipped off to the USSR. The Guard's tankers of the 2nd

Ukrainian Front drove these 76mm Shermans into western Hungary, encircling Budapest, and eventually taking Vienna in these tanks.

A Lend-Lease 76mm Sherman counts as tank for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a tank in any late war Theatre Selectors from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement.

Cost	235pts (Regular), 292pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret-mounted heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and forward-facing hull-mounted MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Options	- May add a pintle-mounted HMG on the turret for +25pts



A Lend-Lease Sherman helps the Soviets break through the Axis fortifications

TRANSPORTS

LEND-LEASE M3 WHITE SCOUT CAR

Designed and manufactured in the United States by the White Motor Company, the M3 Scout Car was an armoured truck supplied to the Soviet Union as part of the Lend-Lease arrangement. The M3 Scout Car had a low cost and well proven parts, so was reliable. Of the 20,918 vehicles built, 3,100 were sent to the USSR from 1942 where they were fitted locally with Buda-Lanova

78 bhp diesel engine. This local variant was called the M3A1E1 and the diesel engine allowed for an increase in operational range as well as being more suited to the freezing winter conditions. The M3E1 could carry up to eight infantry and could provide fire support with three machine guns – one .50 calibre and two .30 calibre – all mounted on a skate rail around the front hull. In Red Army service, the car was used primarily as a reconnaissance vehicle for the *Rota Razvedki* units, but also as a gun tractor for the ZIS-3 76-mm field gun. These hardy vehicles served well until 1947 and inspired later Soviet designs like the BTR-40.

A Lend-Lease M3 White Scout Car counts as transport for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, and may also be taken as a transport in any Theatre Selectors set from 1943 onwards from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement.

Cost	86pts (Regular), 103pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 pintle-mounted HMG covering the forward arc
Damage value	7+ (armoured car)
Transport	Up to 8 men
Tow	Light or medium anti-tank gun, light howitzer, light anti-aircraft gun
Options	- May add additional pintle-mounted MMG covering the right and rear arc for +15pts - May add additional pintle-mounted MMG covering the left and rear arc for +15pts
Special Rules	- Open-topped



Soviet Lend-Lease M3 White Scout Car

LEND-LEASE UNIVERSAL CARRIER

The ubiquitous Universal Carrier saw action with the British Commonwealth forces in every theatre they fought in, from the North African desert to the jungles of Burma. This iconic armoured carrier also crossed the frozen steppes of Eastern Europe as over two thousand of these vehicles were sent to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease by British factories from 1942. The Red Army deployed them mainly in scouting roles, carrying the men of the *Rota Razvedki*. These small and nimble vehicles were well suited to this purpose. Armed the same as the British version, they came complete with Bren guns and some even had Boys anti-tank rifles, although ammunition for these was in short supply so they were phased out over time. Some Red Army crews increased their firepower by replacing the pintle mounted Bren gun with a Soviet DShK heavy machine gun.

A Lend-Lease Universal Carrier counts as transport for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as a transport in any Theatre Selectors set from 1943 onwards from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* supplement.

Cost	60pts (Regular), 74pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 forward-facing hull-mounted LMG
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Transport	Up to 5 men
Tow	Light or medium anti-tank gun
Options	- Add a pintle-mounted LMG for +10pts - Replace pintle mounted LMG with a pintle mounted HMG for +15pts - Replace forward-facing LMG with Boys Anti-tank Rifle for +10pts
Special Rules	- Open-topped - Turn on the spot: Can execute a full speed run rate 'reverse' finishing the move facing in direction of travel.



Hungarian militia and Waffen-SS troops defend the graveyard from Soviet attack

ROMANIAN NEW UNITS



INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

INFANTRY

COMBAT PIONEER SECTION

At the outbreak of war, Romania had 26 Pioneer Battalions to support its Infantry, Cavalry, and Mountain Divisions. Each was trained and equipped for specialist tasks such as knocking out enemy bunkers, clearing minefields, and making opposed river crossings. Two of their most hazardous battlefield tasks were to destroy tanks in close combat, usually with the Romanian MAN model 1939 anti-tank mine, and to lead assault groups using SMGs and Italian 1937 pattern Pignone flamethrowers. The Combat Pioneers were some of Romania's most highly trained infantry and modelled closely on their German counterparts from 1942 onwards.

A Combat Pioneer Section counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in the 1944 Allied Romanian Infantry Division Theatre Selectors in this book or the 1941–43 Onwards to the Caucasus! and 1943–44: War in Romania Theatre Selectors from page 94 and 96 of the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement.

Cost	70pts (Regular) 91pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 6 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 7 additional men with rifles at +10pts (Regular) or +13pts (Veteran) each - The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a flamethrower for +20pts. Another man becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts - Equip the entire squad with anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man - Equip the entire squad with mine clearing gear for +1pts per man
Special Rules	- Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken) - Mine clearing gear: (If taken) Add +2 when clearing mines



Romanian Sd Kfz 222 armoured car

MOUNTAIN DIVISION SECTION

In contrast to the conscripted peasants in the rifle divisions, the Romanian Mountain Brigades were professional soldiers. Known as *Vanatori de Munte* (Mountain Hunters), these troops were considered an elite and their specialist light infantry training gave them more battlefield initiative. Like all Romanian infantry they were equipped with Type 24 main service rifle and the ZB30 light machine gun, with some local Orita submachine guns mixed with Soviet models. The Romanian Mountain Brigades had proved themselves to the Germans in the Crimean campaigns against the Red Army in 1943–44. After switching sides their expertise in mountain warfare was put to good use by the Soviets in Hungary, especially in the hard fighting in the Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania.

A Mountain Division Section counts as Infantry for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional infantry squad option in the 1944 Allied Romanian Infantry Division Theatre Selectors in this book or the 1941–43 Onwards to the Caucasus! and 1943–44: War in Romania Theatre Selectors from page 94 and 96 of the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement.

Cost	98pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 6 men
Weapons	Rifles
	- Add up to 7 additional men with rifles at +14pts (Veteran) each

Options	- The NCO and up to 3 men can have submachine gun instead of rifle for +3pts each - Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another soldier becomes the loader - Up to 1 man can have a panzerfaust in addition to their other weapon for +5pts
Special Rules	- Mountaineers: This unit will treat all rough ground as open ground. The players should discuss and agree before the game if the gaming table includes some terrain that they think this rule should not apply to, like water features and other terrain elements that obviously mountain troops would have no advantage in crossing.

VEHICLES

TANKS

TACAM R-2 TANK DESTROYER

When Romania defected to the Allies in August 1944, the Red Army command confiscated almost all the captured Soviet tanks and heavy weapons from the Romanian army. However, one unique vehicle that was in development which now was able to be deployed was the TACAM R-2. This was a tank destroyer modelled after the German Marder and was made from a converted Škoda 35(t) tank, called the R-2 in Romania, which had a captured Soviet ZiS-3 gun mounted on top in an open fighting compartment. Around 20 of these vehicles were manufactured by Leonida in Bucharest and assigned to the Niculescu Detachment in their fight to clear the Transylvanian frontier of the Hungarians and then onto the siege of Budapest itself. Later, another 12 vehicles were assigned to the Romanian 2nd Armoured Regiment that was sent to liberate Czechoslovakia in February 1945. These were noticed by the Soviets who immediately confiscated most of them seeing as they were carrying captured Soviet guns, in exchange giving the Romanians a few old German tanks.

A TACAM R-2 tank destroyer counts as self-propelled artillery vehicle for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and may also be taken as an additional self-propelled artillery vehicle option in the 1944 Allied Romanian Infantry Division Theatre Selectors in this book or the 1943-44: War in Romania Theatre Selector from page 96 of the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement.

Cost	140pts (Regular), 168pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward facing medium anti-tank gun, hull mounted medium machine gun
Damage value	7+ (tankette)
Options	- ZiS-3 Divisional dual-purpose gun: The main gun may fire as either a medium anti-tank gun or as a light howitzer. This must be declared before the attack is resolved or the ambush order set. - Open-topped

NEW THEATRE SELECTORS



GERMANY

PANZER KAMPFGRUPPE ARMoured PLATOON

In the desperate times of 1944 and 1945, the Reich's panzer formations were mostly deployed in specially formed armoured battle groups to achieve specific tasks or counter attack a particular enemy threat. These Panzer *Kampfgruppe* were not officially organised units in the Order of Battle, but more ad hoc task forces formed as the battlefield situation unfolded. Nor were they of a fixed size, it could range between a company and an army corps. This flexible formation was nothing new and was typical of the Wehrmacht's tactical flexibility. Most often the Panzer Division would combine its tanks with its infantry to form into 'armoured' and 'unarmoured' battle groups. The chief asset of a Panzer Division was its combination of mobility and firepower, but this could only be achieved if there was a close cooperation with the panzer grenadiers who alone could hold the ground taken and allow the tanks to move on. The armoured battle groups always consisted of the best panzers available, supported by the Panzergrenadiers of the lead regiment in their armoured SdKfz 251 half-tracks. These troops would form either the spearhead in an assault or the counter-attack. The remaining truck mounted Panzergrenadiers and the tank hunter and assault gun units of the Panzer Division would then often form a defensive line and protect the flank of the Panzer *Kampfgruppe*.

The epic tank battles on the Hungarian plain involved many Panzer Divisions forming various Panzer *Kampfgruppen*. From the former East Prussian cavalymen of the 24th Panzer Division, the vaunted 1st Panzer 'Oak Leaf' Division, the 13th 'Magdeburger' Panzer Division and the Panzergrenadier Division *Feldherrenhalle*. Often the situation was so desperate that these Panzer *Kampfgruppen* were formed the day of being thrown into the cauldron, with the division's tanks rolling off their train transports and forming up for battle. The fighting in Hungary was so heavy and the casualties so atrocious that the Panzer *Kampfgruppe* would be formed by all the Panzer Divisions remaining tanks, which sometimes was only 5–12 Panther or Panzer IV tanks. So, it is actually possible to collect and field an entire Panzer Division in your games of *Bolt Action*!

A German force for a Panzer *Kampfgruppe* must comprise of one or more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:

1 Command vehicle: Panther Ausf A, G; Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV/L70, Tiger II

2 Vehicles of the same type as the command tank: Panther Ausf A, G, Panzer IV Ausf. H, Jagdpanzer IV/L70, Tiger II

Plus:

Tanks

0–2 Vehicles from: Panther Ausf A, G, Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV/L70, Tiger II

Armoured Cars

0–1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, SdKfz 234/3 Heavy Armoured Car, SdKfz 234/4 Heavy Armoured Car

Anti-Aircraft Vehicle

0–1 Anti-aircraft vehicle from: Wirbelwind, Möbelwagen, SdKfz 7/2 with armoured cab, SdKfz 7/2, SdKfz 251/21 Drilling, Flakpanzer 38(t)

Self-Propelled Artillery

0–1 Self-propelled artillery vehicle from: Wespe, Hummel, SdKfz 251/16 Flammpanzerwagen, SdKfz 251/9 Stummel, SdKfz 251/2 (Mortar Carrier)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry Squads: Panzergrenadier squad, 0–1 Assault Engineers Squad

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Lieutenant (First or Second)

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

0–2 MMG team

0–1 Mortar Team: medium or heavy

0–2 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team

Transports and tows

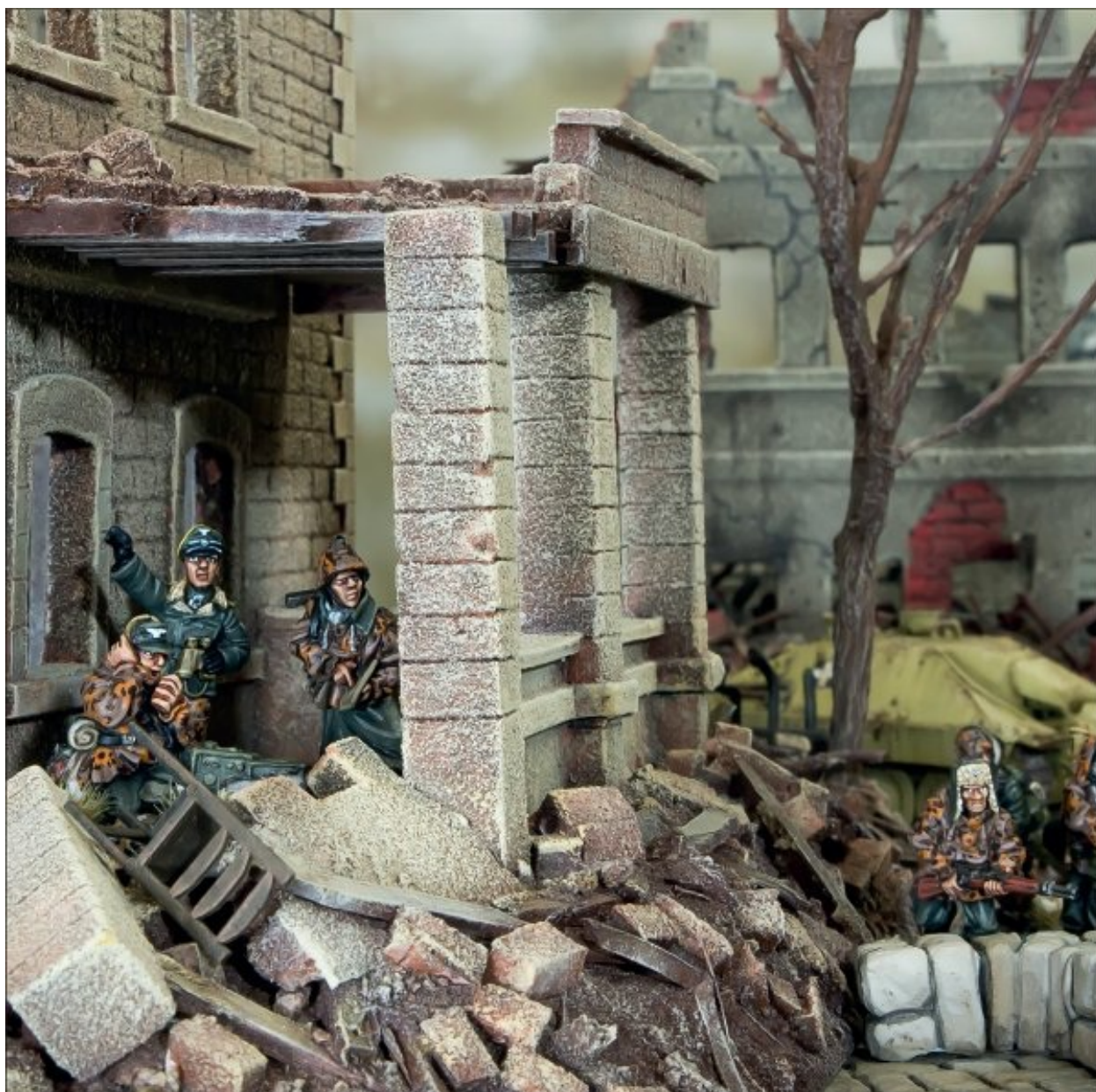
Transports from: SdKfz 251/1 half-track, SdKfz 251/10 half-track, SdKfz 250/1 half-track.

The armoured platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all models in the infantry units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry. All must be armoured transports as indicated in the available units in the selector.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Armoured Assault

The Panzer Divisions mount their best men in armoured half-tracks to keep pace with the tanks, they are commanded by veterans of many battles on the eastern front. Officers in this platoon may use 'You Men, Snap To Action!' rules on page 83 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook to issue orders to friendly units within command range even if inside an armoured transport vehicle. Orders may be issued to the transport unit, any unit also within the same vehicle or any unit within command range of the officer. To work out the officer's command range, simply measure from anywhere on the vehicle the officer is being transported within.



The Waffen-SS set up a command post in the ruins

1944–45 PANZERGRENADIER REINFORCED PLATOON

The majority of the Panzergrenadier Divisions did not ride into battle in armoured half-tracks, they instead were motorised in trucks and field cars. Like their armoured counterparts they did have special tactical training to work in unison with the Panzers. They fought with the hard determination for which the *Panzertruppen* were renowned, and had a lethal amount of fire power at their disposal. When a Panzer Division's best armoured assets were gathered together

and sent off as an independent battlegroup, the remaining panzer grenadiers would be tasked with holding the flanks or assaulting less well fortified positions. To back them up the Panzer Divisions towed artillery, tank hunters and assault guns would be assigned to them. Panzer grenadiers fought across the Hungarian Plain and even within the streets of Budapest, with the trapped men of 13th Panzer Division and Panzergrenadier Division *Feldherrnhalle* forming the backbone of the Axis defence.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant
2 Infantry units from: Panzer Grenadier Squad

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic team
0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: Panzer Grenadier Squad, 0–1 Assault Engineers Squad
0–2 MMG teams
0–1 Mortar Team: Medium or Heavy
0–1 Sniper team
0–2 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team

Artillery

0–1 gun from:
Anti-tank Gun: 75mm Pak 40
Field Artillery: light artillery, medium artillery, heavy artillery
Anti-Aircraft gun: 20mm Flak 38, 20mm Flakvierling 38, 88mm Flak 36 dual purpose AA/AT gun.

Armoured Cars

0–2 Armoured Car or Recce vehicle from: SdKfz 231 Heavy Armoured Car (8-Rad), SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen with medium machine gun upgrade

Tanks

0–1 vehicle from: Panther Ausf A, G; Panzer IV Ausf. H, Jagdpanzer IV/L70

Tank Destroyers, Self Propelled Artillery, Anti-aircraft Vehicles

0–1 vehicle from: SdKfz 7/2, StuG III Ausf G & H, StuG IV, StuH 42, Jagdpanzer IV, Hetzer

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Truck, heavy field car, SdKfz 7 half-track, Schwimmwagen, Kübelwagen

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Motorised Infantry

The Panzergrenadier platoon must include enough transport vehicles and/or tows (either soft skinned or armoured) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry and/or artillery.



German Panzergrenadiers dismount their Sd Kfz 251/1

PANZER RECONNAISSANCE REINFORCED PLATOON

The armoured reconnaissance battalions, known as the *AufklärungsAbteilungen*, were the eyes and ears of the Panzer Divisions and were made up of some of it's best men. First onto the field they would operate ahead of the main force to gather intelligence on what enemy formations awaited them. The majority of the reconnaissance troops did not actually carry out the scouting activities, but sought to dominate the area with firepower and allow the armoured cars to break through the enemy line and carry out their intelligence gathering mission. The armoured SdKfz 250 half-tracks of the *Aufklärungs* platoons carried their Panzergrenadiers right up close to the enemy while the men riding in Schwimmwagens used them for speed, before dismounting to approach the enemy positions on foot. In a retreat the *Aufklärungs* men would be the last to leave the field as they screened the rest of the Panzer Division's withdrawal.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Panzer Grenadier Squads

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–5 Infantry Squads: Panzer Grenadier Squad, Kradschützen Squad

0–1 MMG teams

0–1 Mortar Team: Medium or Heavy

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team

Armoured Cars

0–2 Armoured Car or Recce vehicle from: SdKfz 231 Heavy Armoured Car (8-Rad), SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, Panzer II Ausf L 'Luchs', Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen with medium machine gun upgrade

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-propelled Guns and Anti-aircraft Vehicles

0–1 vehicle from: Panther Ausf A, G, Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV/L70, SdKfz 7/2, StuG III Ausf G & H, StuG IV, StuH 42, Jagdpanzer IV, Hetzer, Wirbelwind, Möbelwagen, SdKfz 7/2 with armoured cab, SdKfz 7/2, SdKfz 251/21 Drilling, Flakpanzer 38(t), SdKfz 250/8 Stummel, SdKfz 250/7 (Mortar Carrier)

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: SdKfz 250/1 half-track, Truck, heavy field car, Kübelwagen, Schwimmwagen.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Motorised Infantry

The panzer reconnaissance platoon must include enough transport vehicles and/or tows (either soft skinned or armoured) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry and/or artillery.

Reconnaissance Platoon

The *Aufklärungstruppen* are experts in their craft. Any SdKfz 250/1 half-track, Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen transport vehicles in the platoon may gain the Recce special rule for +10pts per vehicle.

Armoured Assault

The Panzer Divisions mount their best men in armoured half-tracks to keep pace with the tanks, they are commanded by veterans of many battles on the Eastern Front. Officers in this platoon may use 'You Men, Snap To Action!'

rules (see page 83 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) to issue orders to friendly units within command range even if inside a transport vehicle. Orders may be issued to the transport unit, any unit also within the same vehicle or any unit within command range of the officer. To work out the officer's command range, simply measure from anywhere on the vehicle the officer is being transported within.



German motorised scouts

HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY REINFORCED PLATOON

From the outset the German Army appreciated the antitank capabilities of the Flak 36 88mm gun more than its intended anti-aircraft purpose. From the French campaign in 1940 onwards, German anti-tank guns could not penetrate the latest heavy Allied tanks, and so the *Luftwaffe* often assigned Flak Batteries of '88s' in support of frontline ground operations. As well as in Hungary, Flak Regiments fought on both Eastern and Western Fronts in such battles as the hedgerows of Normandy, on 'Hell's Highway' to Arnhem, and atop the Seelow heights at the gates of Berlin. The Flak 36 could in fact depress its muzzle to less than horizontal, which most other anti-tank guns of the time could not. They could also fire HE indirectly like other artillery if necessary. These units were so effective that the Allied tank crews generally attributed tank losses by anti-tank gun to the '88', much like all Panzers confronted were reputed to be 'Tigers'.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Artillery units from: 88mm Flak 36 dual purpose AA/AT gun

Plus:

0–2 artillery units from: 88mm Flak 36 dual purpose AA/AT gun 0–3 anti-aircraft gun from: 20mm Flak 38

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry Squads and Teams

0-2 Infantry Squads: Late War Grenadiers, late War Veteran grenadiers, Reserve Honvéd Division section, Assault Pioneer section (Hungarian)

0-1 MMG teams (Hungarian or German)

0-1 Transport or tow vehicle **per** infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from:

SdKfz 7 half-track, SdKfz 10 half-track, SdKfz 4 half-track, Truck, Heavy field car, Raupenschlepper Ost



Waffen-SS Panther in winter camouflage

IV SS PANZER CORPS ARMoured PLATOON

Considered the best SS *Panzerkorps* on the eastern front in 1944, the IV SS Panzer Corps was originally created in June 1943 to take charge of all of the Waffen SS divisions reforming as Panzer Divisions. Here it absorbed VII SS Panzer Corps in July 1944 which consisted of two divisions, the infamous 3rd SS *Totenkopf* (Death's Head) and Scandinavian foreign volunteers of 5th SS *Wiking* (Viking). Command of the IV SS Panzer Corps was given to the former *Wiking* commander Herbert Otto Gille (Holder of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds). The Corps was then sent to the eastern front in August 1944 where it was deployed into the line near Warsaw. The SS *Panzertruppen* faced the Soviet onslaught of Operation *Bagration* and fought continuously until December, before being pulled out of the line by Hitler himself to be sent to rescue the IX SS Mountain Corps trapped in Budapest. After the three hard fought relief attempts of *Konrad* and the wasteful and futile Operation *Frühlingserwachen*, it ended the war in Austria where its surviving

members surrendered to US forces.

A German force from the *IV SS Panzer Corps* must comprise of one or more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:

1 Command vehicle: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Aus F, G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, StuG III, Ausf G

2 Vehicles from: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Aus F, G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, StuG III, Ausf G

Plus:

Tanks

0–2 Vehicles from: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Ausf G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, StuG III Ausf G, Tiger II

Armoured Cars

0–1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, SdKfz 234/3 Heavy Armoured Car, SdKfz 234/4 Heavy Armoured Car, Panzer II Ausf L 'Luchs', SdKfz 251/20 UHU (see page 106 of *Armies of Germany*) Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen with medium machine gun upgrades

Anti-Aircraft Vehicle

0–1 Anti-aircraft vehicle from: Wirbelwind, Möbelwagen, SdKfz 7/2 with armoured cab, SdKfz 7/2, SdKfz 251/21 Drilling, Flakpanzer 38(t)

Self-Propelled Artillery

0–1 Self-propelled artillery vehicle from: Wespe, Hummel, SdKfz 250/8 Stummel, SdKfz 251/9 Stummel

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Lieutenant (First or Second)

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry Squads: Waffen-SS squad (late-war), SS Panzer Pioneer Squad

0–2 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: medium or heavy

0–1 Sniper team

0–2 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team

Transports and tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the Armoured Platoon from: SdKfz 251/1 half-track, SdKfz 251/10 half-track, SdKfz 250/1 half-track.

The armoured platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all models in the infantry units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry. All must be armoured transports as indicated in the available units in the selector.

SPECIAL RULES

Wiking & Totenkopf

Two of the most infamous Waffen SS Divisions make up the core of this formation. Any infantry unit that has the option to take the Fanatic special rule must do so. Any Headquarters or Infantry unit not already taking the Fanatic special rule must also do so for +3pts per model. No inexperienced units may be taken in this force.

Tenacious Leader

Otto Gille drove his elite Corps onwards to rescue their comrades trapped inside Budapest. All units in this force may re-roll failed order checks to Advance.

Armoured Assault

The SS Panzer Divisions mount their best men in armoured half-tracks to keep pace with the tanks, they are commanded by veterans of many battles on the Eastern Front. Officers in this platoon may use 'You Men, Snap To Action!' rules on page 83 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook to issue orders to friendly units within command range even if inside an armoured transport vehicle. Orders may be issued to the transport unit, any unit also within the same vehicle or any unit within command range of the officer. To work out the officer's command range, simply measure from anywhere on the vehicle the officer is being transported within.

6TH SS PANZER ARMY ARMoured PLATOON

Beginning life as the 6th Panzer Army, this unit played a leading role in the Ardennes offensive before being transferred to Hungary in 1945, there being renamed the 6th SS Panzer Army on 2 April. The order of battle included the 1st SS Panzer Corps with 1st SS 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler' Division and 12th SS 'Hitlerjugend' Division, and the 2nd SS Panzer Corps with 2nd SS 'Das Reich' Division and 9th SS 'Hohenstaufen' Division. All these divisions had in fact fought in the same campaigns in 1944, facing the western allied landings in Normandy, launching Operation *Wacht Am Rhine* in the Ardennes and now

together again in the last German offensive of the war, *Frühlingserwachen*. The Normandy and Ardennes campaigns had resulted in huge losses but the recruiting services had done a good job filling the ranks in terms of numbers, however, the quality of recruits was a major issue. Most of the replacement panzer grenadiers came from the *Kriegsmarine*, *Luftwaffe* or were conscripted teenagers and none had much in the way of the mid-war infantry training. While the men of 6th SS Panzer army may have been lacking, their machines were the most formidable the Reich had to offer. Panthers formed the backbone of the divisions while the Panzer IV was still just able to hold its own at this late stage in the conflict. Joining the venerable StuG in the *Panzerjäger Abteilungen* was the new Jagdpanzer IV/L70, which had a casemate mounted version of the Panthers main gun. Also, the two divisions of the 1st SS Panzer Corps featured even heavier vehicles as part of their order of battle, which usually would have been divisional assets, with some of their *Abteilungen* were formed up of King Tigers and Jagdpanthers.

A German force from the *6th SS Panzer Army* must comprise of one or more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:

1 command vehicle: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Aus G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, Tiger II, StuG III Ausf G

2 vehicles: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Aus G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, Tiger II, StuG III Ausf G

Plus:

Tanks

0–2 vehicles from: Panther Ausf A, G, Panther Aus G with IR Equipment (see page 105 of *Armies of Germany*), Panzer IV Ausf H, Jagdpanzer IV L/70, Tiger II, StuG III Ausf G, Tiger II

Armoured Cars

0–1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, SdKfz 234/3 Heavy Armoured Car, SdKfz 234/4 Heavy Armoured Car, SdKfz 251/20 UHU (see page 106 of *Armies of Germany*) Kübelwagen and Schwimmwagen with medium machine gun upgrades

Anti-Aircraft Vehicle

0–1 Anti-aircraft vehicle from: Wirbelwind, Möbelwagen, SdKfz 7/2 with armoured cab, SdKfz 7/2, SdKfz 251/21 Drilling, Flakpanzer 38(t)

Self-Propelled Artillery

0–1 Self-propelled artillery vehicle from: Wespe, Hummel, SdKfz 250/8 Stummel, SdKfz 251/9 Stummel

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Lieutenant (First or Second)

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry Squads: Late war replacements SS Squad, SS Panzer Pioneer Squad

0–2 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: medium or heavy

0–1 Sniper team

0–2 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team

Transports and tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: SdKfz 251/1 half-track, SdKfz 251/10 half-track, SdKfz 250/1 half-track.

The armoured platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all models in the infantry units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry. All must be armoured transports as indicated in the available units in the selector.

SPECIAL RULES

A Shadow of Their Former Selves

The 6th Panzer Army is made up of the most formidable Waffen SS Panzer Divisions of the war, including the 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, but these units have been transferred straight from the mauling they took in the Ardennes offensive. Desperate to replace the heavy casualties suffered there, the influx of new recruits is of much lower quality than earlier in the war. These once vaunted divisions are a shadow of their former selves. No unit in this army may be veteran other than the platoon HQ.

Armoured Assault

The SS Panzer Divisions mount their best men in armoured half-tracks to keep pace with the tanks, they are commanded by veterans of many battles on the eastern front. Officers in this platoon may use ‘You Men, Snap To Action!’ rules on page 83 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook to issue orders to friendly units within command range even if inside an armoured transport vehicle. Orders may be

issued to the transport unit, any unit also within the same vehicle or any unit within command range of the officer. To work out the officer's command range, simply measure from anywhere on the vehicle the officer is being transported within.



Hungarian War Correspondent

HUNGARY

CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS BORDER GUARDS REINFORCED PLATOON

The Royal Hungarian Army had a variety of units to call on for local defence in its border regions. These consisted of the army-controlled Border Guard, who patrolled the frontier in peacetime but also provided fortress companies to man the defences of strategic mountain passes. A traditional militia levy of the *Székely* communities (the ethnic Hungarian people of Transylvania) and the Ministry of the Interior's Border Police who in times of war could be mobilised to fight invasion. These local infantry forces had only limited access to heavy weapons and no armour. The heavy weapons they did have were of First World War vintage, but still very effective in the confines of the mountain passes. Skoda 75mm mountain guns and Schwarzlose machine guns took a heavy toll on the enemy. However, anti-tank weapons were severely limited to the Solothurn S-1800 anti-tank rifle of only 20mm calibre and the locally manufactured version of the German Pak 36 anti-tank gun which used 40mm ammunition.

Elements of German Army Group South Ukraine joined the local Hungarian forces as they were withdrawing through the region out of Romania, most notably the experienced *Gebirgsjäger* of 4. Mountain Division.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Infantry units of Border Guards Sections. Only one Border Guards Sections per platoon may be upgraded with the flamethrower option.

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (Artillery only)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: Border Guards Section, Gendarmerie Battalion section, Gebirgsjäger Squad (Late War) (see page 27 of *Armies of Germany*)

0–1MMG team

0–1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 Anti-tank team: Anti-tank rifle

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank Gun: light anti-tank gun

Field Artillery: light artillery

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Guardians of the Frontier

The Hungarian Border Guard platoon player may re-roll the dice off to decide who is the defender in any scenario that has an attacker/defender. In addition, this platoon receives D3+1 hard cover defences, each 6” in length and counting as a linear obstacle. These can be represented by barricades or trench lines. They are set up within the Hungarian deployment zone for that scenario at the start of deployment, before any units from either side are set up.

Gebirgsjäger Support

The normal ‘Axis Support’ national rule does not apply to this platoon – instead, this Hungarian platoon can include German Gebirgsjäger squads (Late War) who will retain all their own national special rules found in *Armies of Germany*.



The Last Ditch by Darko Pavlovic © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Men at Arms 449: The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II.

ASSAULT ARTILLERY BATTERY ARMoured PLATOON

The Hungarian General Staff had learnt a terrible lesson in modern armoured warfare from the disaster on the Don River in the winter of 1942–43, where the Hungarian 2nd Army was almost completely wiped out by the Soviet *Uranus* offensive to surround Stalingrad. The Honvéd infantry needed direct fire

support that was mobile and effective against both enemy tanks and strong points. The current light tanks being manufactured, like the Toldi, were wholly inadequate to stand up to the Soviet T-34, despite the bravery of the Hungarian crews. The solution was to not only manufacture heavier tank designs like the Turán, but to form a new armoured branch of the artillery, inspired by the German StuG assault guns. Their job would be to provide immediate and direct fire support to the infantry divisions at the critical moment of attack or defence.

The *Rohamágyús Üteg* (Assault Artillery Battalions) became an elite branch of the Royal Hungarian Army, drawing volunteers from the existing artillery units in October 1943. Captain József Barankay was charged with creating eight assault gun battalions which were numbered the 1st, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 20th, 24th, and 25th – each taking the number of the infantry division they were created to support.

A new vehicle, the Zrínyi II assault howitzer, was locally designed to equip all the new Assault Artillery Battalions. Based off the Turán tank chassis, chief engineer of the Manfréd Weiss factory Ernő Kovácsházi combined this with the locally produced 40M 105 mm howitzer to create a fully enclosed, well armoured, and low-profile assault gun. Originally the design had intended to use the 43M 75 mm anti-tank gun, but shortage of materials and the bombing of the Manfréd Weiss factory on Csépel Island in Budapest by American bombers stopped this from happening. This bombing raid on 27 July meant that the Hungarians could only salvage 20 or so hulls from the rubble to add to those already manufactured, meaning only 72 Zrínyi II were available. The Hungarian factories could only produce 4–5 per month, so the German made Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer and StuG Ausf.G assault guns would end up equipping many of the new units. Some Batteries even had to make do with towed 75mm Pak 40 Anti-tank guns. Because the howitzer model of the Zrínyi was the only one to reach full production a new high explosive anti-tank (HEAT) round was adapted, the 1942M, making them capable of defeating the Soviet T-34.

On the battlefield the Hungarian Assault Artillery were deployed by the Battery, this was usually 10 assault guns in three squadrons of three and their HQ vehicle. They supported, but were not subordinate to, the infantry units to which they were attached. The assault guns were the infantry's only real assault element and a very scarce resource, so the Assault Artillery officers were directly involved in the planning of attacks and advised their infantry counterparts on the best use of ground to coordinate the efforts of both the men and machines.

These officers were often aggressive and daring, like Captain József Barankay, commander of the 1st Assault Gun Battalion. He was so resigned to his fate that he sold his flat in Budapest before joining his unit at the front and maintained a grave for himself between the first two casualties of the battalion. The *Rohamágyús Úteg* were always deployed with Infantry support and fought in mountains of Transylvania, the Great Hungarian Plain, and the very streets of the capital, Budapest.

TOP SECRET

VICE ADMIRAL MIKLOS HORTHY

Born in 1886, Vice Admiral Vitéz Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya was the wartime leader of the Kingdom of Hungary as its regent from 1919–1944. He came to power as a compromise solution after the sudden fall of the Habsburg dynasty, and the lack of a suitably experienced political leader. He had made his name as the last head of the Austro-Hungarian Navy from February 1918 in the First World War. Covered in tattoos, (including a dragon on the breast that he often showed in public) under his grand Navy uniform, he actually saw himself as a captain at the helm of the nation, steering Hungary through the troubled waters of the 1920's and 30's. He was a conservative military man and fought against both communists and fascists in his homeland. He had no fondness for the Nazis and actually despised Hitler. He was anti-Semitic but tried to protect the Hungarian Jews. He helped rebuild his nation after the disastrous First World War and invasion by Romania, after which he installed a limited constitutional monarchy.

With the tide turning against the Axis nations in 1944, he attempted to take his beleaguered country out of the war. His secret attempts for a separate peace with the Soviets were discovered by the Germans and he was arrested by the SS on 15 October 1944 after he announced over Hungarian radio that his country was leaving the war. The Germans launched *Operation Panzerfaust*, an SS raid by men from *SS-Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon 600* and led by Otto Skorzeny, to depose Horthy and replace him with local fascist Arrow Cross Party leader Ferenc Szálasi. His son was even kidnapped and sent to Dachau to try and keep him in line, with Horthy himself imprisoned in Hirschberg am Haarsee castle in Bavaria. After the war Horthy was summoned to the Nuremberg trials, but only as a witness, not an accused. He was never allowed to see his homeland again, instead he died in exile in Portugal. In 1993, according to his last wishes, his ashes were returned to Hungary.

A Hungarian force for an Assault Artillery Battery must comprise of one or more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:



A Budapest pocket defenders reinforced platoon

1 Command vehicle: 43m Zrínyi II, Hetzer or StuG III Ausf G

2 Vehicles from: 43m Zrínyi II, Hetzer or StuG III Ausf G

Plus:

0-2 Vehicles from: 43m Zrínyi II, Hetzer or StuG III Ausf G

Headquarters

0-1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

0-1 Medic team

0-1 Forward Observer (Artillery)

Infantry

0-3 Infantry Squads: Experienced Honvéd Division section, Assault Pioneers section, Replacement Honvéd Division section

0-1 MMG team

0-1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0-1 Sniper team

0-1 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team, Anti-tank rifle team, 44m Páncélrém Rocket Launcher

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank Gun: 75mm PAK 40

Field Artillery: light artillery

Anti-Aircraft gun: 40mm Bofors gun

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport or tow vehicle **per** infantry or artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from:

Truck, artillery tractor

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Motivated Elite

When any assault gun vehicle or anti-tank gun artillery units in this platoon successfully passes an order check, remove D2 pins rather than the usual 1.

Infantry Support Role

Transport vehicles are not compulsory for the infantry units in this force like other armoured platoons.



The Hungarian 'Mace thrower' rocket launcher is lethal for tanks in the ruins of Budapest

HUNGARIAN ARMoured FIELD DIVISION ARMoured PLATOON

Hungary was unique among Germany's eastern front allies in that it possessed a large enough industrial base to produce its own natively designed armoured fighting vehicles. First deploying a Rapid Corps of light Toldi tanks and Csaba armoured cars in the initial invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, this armoured unit was wiped out at Stalingrad and three new Armoured Field Divisions were

raised to replace it in 1943. Following the Huba III plan, the 1st and 2nd Armoured Divisions and 1st Cavalry Division all followed the same structure. Each had a reconnaissance battalion, two tank battalions (each with two heavy and two medium tank companies), three motorised infantry battalions, one anti-tank artillery battalion and an engineer battalion. The reconnaissance troops were equipped with Csaba armoured cars, and Nimrod self-propelled anti-aircraft artillery served in this role and also as tank hunters. The medium tank companies were made up of the Hungarian Turán I tank and heavy companies comprised of Turán II tanks with their larger 75mm guns. All three divisions were heavily engaged in the battles to defend the Kingdom of Hungary from the Soviet offensives of 1944, and all drew upon their nation's *Huszár* traditions of light cavalry daring to make up for deficiencies in tank design.

The 1st Armoured division was made up entirely of Hungarian built vehicles and first saw combat at Arad, where it attempted to hold the Transylvanian border. After this, in cooperation with the German panzers, the men and machines of the 1st Armoured Division fought on the Hungarian plain around Debrecen to secure the line on the Tisza River. Most of the division was destroyed in heavy fighting north of Budapest over the winter of 1944–45.

The 2nd Armoured division was initially equipped with both Turán I and II tanks but heavy fighting in the Ukraine in the summer of 1944 led to the units losses being replaced with mostly German tanks. This division received Panzer IV, *Sturmgeschütz* III, and even Panther and Tiger I Ausf. E heavy tanks. Turning south, this division fought in the battle of Tordá, where it helped the Hungarian 2nd Army fight the Red Army and Romanians to standstill for a month in September 1944.

The 1st Cavalry Division was mobilised in April 1944 under pressure from the Germans and sent north into the path of Soviet Operation *Bagration*, where it found itself filling gaps on the rapidly disintegrating German line in eastern Poland. This elite division refused orders to fight against the uprising in Warsaw, its commander, General Mihály vitéz Ibrányi, sighting the long-standing friendship between the Polish and Hungarian peoples. Despite this the cavalymen were mentioned many times in German despatches for their fighting spirit against the Soviets, and praised by Guderian himself. On 23 September the now renamed 1st *Huszár* Division returned to Budapest to aid in its defence. The remnants of 2nd Armoured Division were also caught in the encircled capital and acted as a mobile reserve within the siege ring before surrendering

with the city on 13 February 1945.

A Hungarian force for an Armoured Field Division platoon must comprise of one or more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:

1 Command Vehicle; 40M Turán, 40M Turán II

2 Tanks; 40M Turán, 40M Turán II

Plus:

Tanks

0–3 vehicle from: 40M Turán, 40M Turán II, Panther Ausf. A & G, Panzer IV Ausf. H, Tiger I Ausf. E, Hetzer

Armoured Car

0–1 Armoured car or Recce Vehicles from: 39M Csaba

Anti-Aircraft Vehicle

0–1 Anti-aircraft vehicle from: Nimrod Self-propelled Anti-aircraft gun

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

0–1 Medic team

Infantry

0–3 Infantry Squads: Experienced Honvéd Division section, Assault Pioneers section, Cavalry section

0–1 MMG teams

0–1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team, 44m Páncélrém Rocket Launcher

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank Gun: Heavy anti-tank gun (75mm Pak 40)

Field Artillery: light artillery, medium artillery, heavy artillery

Anti-Aircraft gun: 40mm Bofors Anti-aircraft gun

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Truck, artillery tractor

The armoured platoon must include enough transport vehicles and/or tows

(either soft skinned or armoured) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry and/or artillery.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Pride of the Magyar

The Hungarian tank crews made up for material disadvantages with the dash and aggression of their Hussar forebears. All tanks and armoured cars in the first wave or deployed on the table are allowed to make a pre-game move, after both sides have finished set-up, but before the first turn of the game. Use the vehicles *Advance* rate and number of turns. Terrain will affect this move. During this move, the unit cannot be targeted by enemies in Ambush. In addition, any tank or armoured car units in reserve do not suffer the -1 roll to arrive from outflanking.



Officer and NCO of Panzergrenadier Division Feldherrnhalle

HUNGARY & GERMANY

BUDAPEST POCKET DEFENDERS REINFORCED PLATOON

From early 1944 the German *Wehrmacht* had provided liaison officers to the Hungarian *Honvédség* at divisional level or above to help with operational tactics. But with the situation now more desperate due to the low morale and inadequate armament of the Hungarian infantry more extreme measures were introduced on 28 October by General von Grolman, with all Hungarian troops being ordered to integrate into German formations. This was aimed to 'improve the staying power of the Hungarian units'. The hope was the Hungarians would perform better under the immediate command of the better-armed and more experienced German forces. The Hungarian rank and file resented these changes but it did have the desired effect of reducing desertions and increasing the combat effectiveness of the Axis infantry.

The 79,000 Axis troops trapped in the Budapest pocket were a mixed bag but boasted some formidable units. The infantry ranged from local Hungarian Gendarmerie (police) and militia units to the elite German SS Cavalrymen and Panzergrenadiers of the *Feldherrnhalle* Division. The defenders also boasted decent artillery support, while the ammunition lasted, with Hummel 150mm self-propelled guns of 13th Panzer Division and '88's of the Luftwaffe Flak Brigade. The desperate Axis troops even had a pool of tanks and self-propelled guns which they carefully used to counter attack with or deal with Soviet breakthroughs. Panthers and Panzer IV's of 13th Panzer Division, Hungarian Assault guns of Group Billnitzer, and even some old Italian Fiat Ansaldo tankettes of the Hungarian Gendarmerie. The 12th SS Panzer *Polizei Kompanie* even had twelve Italian M15/42 tanks and eight M42 assault guns which were thrown into the street fighting. Some factories within the Pest bridgehead were turned into tank repair facilities to keep these machines fighting throughout the siege.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant (German or Hungarian)

2 Infantry units from: Experienced Honvéd Division section, Replacement Honvéd Division section, Assault Pioneer section (German or Hungarian), Gendarmerie Battalion section, Arrow Cross Militia section, Vannay Battalion Flying Squad, University Assault Battalion section, Danube Flotilla Infantry

Section, Panzergrenadier squad, Heer Veteran Grenadier squad, Heer Grenadier squad, 22nd SS Cavalry Division Squad, 8th SS Cavalry Division Squad

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (Artillery only)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: Experienced Honvéd Division section, Replacement Honvéd Division section, Assault Pioneer section (German or Hungarian), Gendarmerie Battalion section, Arrow Cross Militia section, Vannay Battalion Flying Squad, University Assault Battalion section, Danube Flotilla Infantry Section, Panzergrenadier squad, Heer Veteran Grenadier squad, Heer Grenadier squad, 22nd SS Cavalry Division Squad, 8th SS Cavalry Division Squad

0–1 MMG teams (German or Hungarian)

0–1 Mortar Team: light, medium or heavy (German or Hungarian)

0–1 Sniper team (German or Hungarian)

0–1 Anti-tank team: Panzerschreck team, (German or Hungarian), 44m Páncélrém Rocket Launcher

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank Gun: 75mm Pak 40, (German or Hungarian), Light antitank gun (Hungarian), 44M Buzogányvető rocket launcher

Field Artillery: Light artillery, Medium artillery, Heavy artillery (German or Hungarian)

Anti-Aircraft gun: 40mm Bofors gun, 80mm 29/38M Heavy Anti-aircraft gun, 88mm Flak 36 dual purpose AA/AT gun, 20mm Flak 38

Armoured Car, Tank, Tank Destroyer, Self-Propelled Artillery, and Anti-aircraft Vehicle

0–1 vehicle from: SdKfz 231 Heavy Armoured Car (8-Rad), SdKfz 250/9 Half-track, SdKfz 251/23 half-track, Kübelwagen, Schwimmwagen, Panther Ausf A, G, Panzer IV H, Panzer IV/70, Hummel, StuG III Ausf G & H, StuH 42, Hetzer, 43M Zrínyi II, Wirbelwind, Möbelwagen, SdKfz 7/2 with armoured cab, SdKfz 7/2, SdKfz 251/21 Drilling, Flakpanzer 38(t), SdKfz 250/8 Stummel, SdKfz 251/9 Stummel, SdKfz 251/16 Flammpanzerwagen, SdKfz 251/2 (Mortar Carrier), Polizei M15/42 Tank, CV35 Tankette, Csaba 40M, 40M Turán, 40M Turán II, Toldi II, Nimrod Self-propelled Anti-aircraft gun

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Truck, heavy field car, Kübelwagen, Schwimmwagen, SdKfz 251/1 half-track, SdKfz 251/10 half-track, and SdKfz 250/1 half-track



Hungarian Hetzer tank destroyer

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Multi-national Force

Each unit retains all the national special rules appropriate to them. If any German infantry units are included in the reinforced platoon then a German HQ must be included within the same reinforced platoon. German officers in this platoon may use 'You Men, Snap To Action!' rules on page 83 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook to issue orders to all friendly units within command range, Hungarian officers can only issue orders to Hungarian units.

Street Barricades

This platoon receives D3 defensive positions, which are 6" linear obstacles, and count as hard cover. These are always deployed before any units on either side and can be placed anywhere within the Axis players deployment zone for the scenario being played. If the scenario has no deployment zone, set up the defensive positions within 12" of the Axis table edge.



A Vannay Battalion Flying Squad patrols the Buda suburbs

SOVIET UNION

URBAN ASSAULT GROUP REINFORCED PLATOON

The Soviet infantry units tasked with taking the city of Budapest benefited from the grim lessons learnt by the Red Army during the battle for Stalingrad in late 1942. The unique nature of fighting in the ruins of modern concrete cities presented the attacker with many challenges: narrow lanes of fire on fortified enemy positions, the inability to coordinate large forces of tanks and infantry, or provide them with accurate artillery support. To adapt to this new realm of urban warfare the Red Army created the assault groups or *shturmovye grupp*.

The Red Army Rifle Battalions tasked with reducing Budapest reorganised themselves into these specialist formations by grouping the men armed with submachine guns into the assault group, with the remainder rifle-armed men forming both a consolidation and reserve group which followed behind. The men of the assault group were also equipped with grenades and molotov cocktails in addition to their submachine guns, these weapons having obvious advantages inside buildings where their short range mattered not. Assigned to the assault group were flamethrowers, anti-tank rifles, infantry guns, mortars, and machine guns. The formation needed to be completely self-sufficient and have the firepower to overcome even the most stubborn resistance it encountered.

The localised nature of the fighting meant the officers of the assault groups had control over choosing the heavy weapons needed for each attack, completely tailoring the tools to the mission at hand. They could not rely on calling in artillery support as it was impossible to accurately give their position or that of the enemy as the fighting was at such close range. Sometimes an assault gun or tank would be assigned to an assault group if the enemy position was particularly well fortified. Pioneers were also used to lead many of these assault groups, their job was to clear enemy obstacles like barbed wire, mines, and even use demolition charges to blow holes in walls to allow the following infantry access to the enemy held buildings.

The Soviets deployed these assault groups to advance parallel to each other down streets side by side and reduce the Pest bridgehead block by block. Once

the Axis troops revealed themselves by firing on the Soviet street fighters the assault groups heavy weapons were directed to silence these fixed firing points. With the Axis heavy weapons silenced the submachine gun armed assault squads would attack the position in desperate hand to hand fighting.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Infantry units from: Sub machine gun squad (must be full sized)

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: Sub machine gun squad, up to one assault pioneer squad (the body armour option may not be taken), up to one Guards squad.

0–3 Direct fire support units; Medium machine gun team, light howitzer.

0–2 Flamethrower team

0–1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0–1 Sniper team

0–3 Anti-tank team: Anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Field Artillery: ZIS-3 Divisional gun, 122mm Heavy howitzer, Medium howitzer

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-Propelled Artillery and Anti-aircraft Vehicles

0–1 vehicle from: SU-76M assault gun, T-34, T-34/85, OT-34, Lend-Lease M4 76mm Sherman.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Specialised Unit

The task of the Assault Group is grim work and no place for an inexperienced conscript.

The ‘Quantity has a quality all of its own’ Soviet national rule is ignored, and this platoon does not receive a free rifle squad as per page 21 of *Armies of the Soviet Union*. In addition, no infantry or artillery unit in this platoon may be taken as inexperienced.



A Soviet Urban Assault Group reinforced platoon

GUARDS MECHANISED BRIGADE ARMoured PLATOON

The Guards Mechanised Corps were the armoured fist of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. The 2nd, 4th, and 6th Guards Mechanised Corps were in turn made up of various Brigades, consisting of companies of T-34 or Sherman Lend-Lease tanks led by special Forward Detachment reconnaissance parties who seized key terrain and cleared obstacles for the main body. These were supplemented by various Independent Tank units and the IS-2s of the Guards Heavy Tank Regiments. Liaison officers from the air force were also attached to these armoured formations to provide close tactical support.

The Soviet war principle of 'Deep Battle' laid down in their military academies called for the concentration of force with 'long range' mobile battle groups capable of all-arms offensive action. Their task was to break through the Axis front line and into open country, ranging deep into the enemy rear and fragmenting the defender's units, destroying their supply and communications lines. Any pockets of resistance were to be bypassed and left for the Rifle Divisions to mop up later. That was the theory, but often due to the terrain or haste, the Mechanised Corps found themselves assaulting fortified Axis strong points and taking substantial losses.

A Soviet force for a Guards Mechanised Brigade must comprise of one or

more armoured platoons picked from the following Theatre Selector. Each armoured platoon is made up as follows:

1 Command vehicle: T-34/85, T-34/76, IS-2, Sherman M4A2 (75mm), Sherman M4A2 (76mm)

2 Vehicles of the same type as the command tank: T-34/85, T-34/76, IS-2, Sherman M4A2 (75mm), Sherman M4A2 (76mm)

Plus:

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Assault Guns, Self-Propelled Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Vehicles

0–2 Vehicles from: T-34/85, T-34/76, IS-2, Sherman M4A2 (75mm), Sherman M4A2 (76mm) M17 MGMC Anti-aircraft Vehicle, SU-152, SU-76, SU-100, SU-85, ISU-122, Katyusha, BA-64, BA-64B, BA-64DShk, Tokarev 4M Quad Maxim

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Lieutenant (First or Second)

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry Squads: Guards Squad, SMG Squad, Veteran Squad, Tank Riders Squad, LMG Squad, Rifle Squad, Mounted Reconnaissance Squad

0–1 MMG team

0–1 HMG team

0–1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 Flamethrower team

0–1 Anti-tank team: Anti-tank rifle team, 'Tank Hunters' anti-tank team

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank gun: 45mm Model 37, M-42 anti-tank gun, ZIS-2 anti-tank gun, ZIS-3 divisional gun, A-19 field gun, BS-3 anti-tank gun.

Artillery gun: light or medium

Anti-Aircraft gun: 40mm Bofors gun, 37mm 61-k 1939

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport or tow vehicle **per** infantry or artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Truck, Half-track truck, Komsomolets artillery tractor, Gaz jeep, Lend-Lease M3 Scout Car, Lend-Lease Universal Carrier

The armoured platoon must include enough transport vehicles and/or tows (either soft skinned or armoured) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry and/or artillery.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Specialised Unit

The tip of the spear is no place for inexperienced men. The 'Quantity Has a Quality All of Its Own' Soviet national rule is ignored, so this platoon does not receive a free rifle squad as per page 21 of *Armies of the Soviet Union*.

Honour of the Guards

A unit awarded the honorific of a Guards title has much expected of them. All units in a Guards Mechanised Brigade platoon will remove D2 pins instead of the usual 1 when they successfully pass an order check.



Soviet Light Mortar team

FORWARD DETACHMENT RECONNAISSANCE PARTY REINFORCED PLATOON

As the war progressed the Soviets developed and then mastered a system of using Forward Detachments to lead their mobile forces. These advanced guards were powerful armoured fighting groups who were expected to break through the German lines and then operate semi-autonomously well in advance of the force they were spearheading, as far as 30km ahead of their parent unit and at times up to 100km away from their original front lines. Their task was to set the pace of the advance for the main body of the Mechanised Corps, and brush aside enemy defensive positions in the path of the mobile group. If they did their job properly they would also prevent the enemy from regrouping. These forward detachments were spearheaded by reconnaissance parties who scouted the terrain and were quick to seize key bridges and crossroads. They also provided up-to-date intelligence, often engaging the enemy in stand-up fights to do so. The increase in Lend-Lease materiel in 1943 allowed the *Rota Razvedki* (mechanised scouts), who made up the core of these reconnaissance groups, to become fully mechanised in armoured vehicles and have plenty of radio equipment to

coordinate with their main body. Lend-Lease White Scout Cars, M3 half-tracks, and Universal Carriers gave the scouts a huge amount of firepower as they typically mounted multiple machine guns. To root out particularly stubborn resistance the men carried close assault weapons such as submachine guns and even flamethrowers.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Infantry units from: Mounted Reconnaissance Squad. Only one Mounted Reconnaissance Squad per platoon may be upgraded to have a flamethrower.

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–2 Infantry Squad: Mounted Reconnaissance Squad

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Anti-tank Gun: 45mm Model 37, M-42 anti-tank gun, ZIS-2 antitank gun, ZIS-3 divisional gun.

Armoured car

0–2 Armoured Car or Recce vehicle from: BA-64, BA-64B, BA-64DShk

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–1 Tank, Tank Destroyer, Self-Propelled Artillery, and Anti-aircraft vehicle from: T-34/85, T-34/76, Sherman M4A2 (75mm), Sherman M4A2 (76mm) M17 MGMC Anti-aircraft Vehicle

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Lend-Lease M3 Scout Car, Lend-Lease Universal Carrier, Gaz 'jeep'.

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Forward Detachment

Being fully mechanised was critical for the men of the Forward Detachment to perform their task. This platoon must include enough transport vehicles and/or tows (either soft skinned or armoured) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, up to a maximum of one transport per unit of infantry and/or artillery.

Set the Pace

The momentum of the advance must be kept up; if the enemy is allowed to regroup than the Forward Detachment could be stranded behind enemy lines. All Armoured cars, and transport vehicles with at least one unit inside, are allowed to make a 12" move (with the number of pivots equal to that vehicles allowance for an advance move) after both sides have finished set-up, but before the first turn of the game. During this move the unit may move onto the table if in a first wave and the unit cannot be targeted by enemies in Ambush.

Reconnaissance Platoon

The *Rota Razvedki* were experts in their craft. Any Lend-Lease M3 Scout Car, Lend-Lease Universal Carrier, and Gaz 'jeep' transport vehicles in the platoon may gain the Recce special rule for +10pts per vehicle.

Specialised Unit

The tip of the spear is no place for inexperienced men. The 'Quantity has a quality all of its own' Soviet national rule is ignored and this platoon does not receive a free rifle squad as per page 21 of *Armies of the Soviet Union*.

SOVIET ANTI-TANK STRONGPOINT REINFORCED PLATOON

Soviet intelligence had discovered the build-up of German panzer forces near Lake Balaton in February 1945 for their planned Operation *Spring Awakening*. To counter this, the *Stavka* ordered Tolbukhin's 3rd Ukrainian Front to set up a defence in depth but did not assign to him all the forces they could. In fact, the infantry and armoured units made available to him were limited as the Soviet's had their own offensive planned to begin on 16 March, with the goal of liberating the rest of western Hungary and capturing the Austrian capital of Vienna. All the best units were earmarked for Operation *Vienna*, and the use of these troops to help blunt the coming German offensive was strictly forbidden. This situation led to Tolbukhin using a strategy similar to Kursk, where his goal was to wear the German panzers down on multiple defence lines before launching an armoured assault of his own. The men of the 3rd Ukrainian front now set about building a formidable defensive front of three lines, each up to 5km deep and between 3 and 8km between them. The Red Army dug 2,400km of trenches, almost 250,000 mines were laid, and the muddy terrain and countless canals of the area between lakes Balaton and Velence was used to their advantage. Key to the success of these defence lines were the anti-tank strong

points. These were nests of well-sited and dug in anti-tank guns supported by infantry. Each was situated covering key terrain and roads which the German panzers would be expected to try and cross. Additional guns had been transferred from neighbouring fronts to bolster the 26th Army, which would hold these positions. By early March 5,535 guns and mortars had been deployed in these defensive works, with 2,976 being anti-tank guns. These included 1,178 of the ubiquitous ZIS 3 Divisional guns and 36 of the deadly 100mm BS 3. This gave the anti-tank gun belts a density of 24.7 guns per km. One weakness of these anti-tank gun nests was that the supporting infantry was of poor quality, being mostly conscripts from recently liberated territories. The only mobile reserves available to these static strong points were limited to self-propelled artillery units equipped with SU-76's and the new SU-100.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Artillery units from: ZiS-3 Divisional gun, ZiS-2 Anti-tank gun, BS-3 anti-tank gun

Plus:

0-2 Artillery units from: ZiS-3 Divisional gun, ZiS-2 Anti-tank gun, BS-3 anti-tank gun

Headquarters

0-1 Captain or Major

0-1 Medic team

0-1 Commissar

0-1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0-2 Infantry Squads: Rifle Squad, LMG Squad

0-1 MMG team

0-1 Mortar Team: medium or heavy

Artillery

0-1 gun from:

Field Artillery: Light Howitzer

Anti-Aircraft gun: 37mm 61-K Model 1939 Anti-aircraft gun

Tank Destroyers and Self-Propelled Artillery Vehicles

0-1 vehicle from: SU-76, SU-100

Transports and Tows

0-1 Transport or tow vehicle **per** infantry or artillery unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Artillery tractor, T-20 Komsomolets, M5 Half Track, Gaz 'Jeep', Half-track truck, Truck

SPECIAL RULES

Static Strongpoint

The anti-tank positions themselves did not feature armoured vehicles, these were always placed in reserve to be called up if an enemy breakthrough looked likely. Any Tank Destroyers or Self-propelled Artillery vehicles in this army must be placed in reserve if the mission has the option to do so.



Soviet 45mm anti-tank guns

ROMANIA

1944 ALLIED ROMANIAN INFANTRY DIVISION REINFORCED PLATOON

With the volte-face of the Romanian leadership on 26 August and joining the Allied side of the conflict on 28 August, the Romanian infantrymen now found himself fighting for his former enemy – the Soviets. Although brave, the opinion of the Red Army officers of their new allies was low. The quality of the Romanian troops under Soviet command ranged from poor to outstanding. Many formations received praise from their Red Army commanders, while others were deemed ‘not suitable for employment in the main sectors of the front.’

The Romanian infantry divisions suffered from being undermanned, under armed, and poorly led. The senior officers were not leading from the front; while in contrast junior officers suffered a high casualty rate. The problem worsened as the replacement junior officers usually came from amongst the sergeants and privates who had extremely limited leadership skills. The army lacked motor transport and, most importantly, anti-tank weapons, having only a single battery of 75mm guns per division. The rank and file of the Romanian rifle divisions was composed of semi-literate peasants using obsolete tactics. Nevertheless, their ancient rivalry with the Hungarians and desire to reclaim the lands of Transylvania often resulted in the Romanian infantry fighting very tenaciously.

The Romanians contributed 210,000 men to the 2nd Ukrainian Front, forming over one third of its infantry divisions. Given modern support in the form of Red Army tanks and artillery, the hard-bitten Romanian infantrymen were able to secure many victories in the fighting in Transylvania, at Debrecen, and Budapest itself.

1 2nd Lieutenant or 1st Lieutenant

2 Infantry units from: Late War Infantry Section, Mountain Division Section

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Soviet Commissar*

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward Observer* (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: Late War Infantry Section, Mountain Division Section, Combat Pioneer Section

0–1 MMG team

0–1 Mortar Team: light or medium

0–1 Sniper team

Artillery

0–1 artillery:

Field Artillery: light artillery

Anti-tank Gun: 75mm TAC Resita Anti-tank gun, 45mm Model 37*, M-42 anti-tank gun*, ZIS-2 anti-tank gun*, ZIS-3 divisional*, A-19 field gun*, BS-3 anti-tank gun*.

Anti-Aircraft gun: Light Automatic Cannon, Heavy Automatic Cannon

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–1 vehicle from: TACAM R-2, SU-76M assault gun*, T-34/76*, T-34/85*, OT-34*, Lend-Lease M4A4 Sherman (75mm)*, Lend-Lease M4A4 Sherman (76mm)*

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **for every two** infantry units in the Reinforced Platoon from: Truck

0–1 Tow per Romanian artillery unit: Horse-drawn limber

0–1 Tow per Soviet artillery unit: Truck*, Half-track truck*, Komsomolets artillery tractor*



Soviet Naval Brigade use the cover of night to snatch an unwary German officer

SELECTOR SPECIAL RULES

Replace all Romanian national rules from *Armies of Italy and the Axis* with the following:

Stalin's Cannon Fodder

The Soviets often used the massed peasant riflemen of their new allies as cannon fodder, throwing them into the most vicious assaults. For every three Romanian regular or inexperienced sections taken of the same type, a fourth section will be free. This free section is identical to the cheapest squad purchased at the lowest experience level already chosen.

Red Army Support

The Soviets assigned many anti-tank units to bolster the Romanian infantry divisions as well as Commissars to ensure their correct level of motivation. All units marked with an asterisk (*) are taken from the *Armies of the Soviet Union* army list. These units retain their relevant unit special rules and the Soviet

national special rule “Great Patriotic War” from page 21 of *Armies of the Soviet Union*.

Ancestral Enemies

Whenever a Romanian and Hungarian unit are engaged in an assault, both side’s units count as having the *Fanatic* special rule.



German Snipers by Ramiro Bujeiro © Osprey Publishing. Taken from *Weapon 24: German Automatic Rifles 1941–45*

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL RULES



CITY FIGHTING

The Eastern Front was marked by some of the most vicious city battles of the war. Of them all, Stalingrad is undoubtedly the most infamous, because the very heart of that city became a battleground for many months and the German *Heer* suffered its first catastrophic defeat with the complete loss of Paulus' Sixth Army. However, there were many other cities that became battlegrounds in the east: Kharkov, Kiev, Sevastopol, Odessa, Voronezh, Vilnius, Warsaw, Königsberg, Budapest, and finally Berlin, to name but a few. Leningrad was besieged for almost three years and the fighting in its suburbs was a constant during that time. All of these places were torn apart by ferocious fighting and if the duration of the battles were shorter in some places than others, the fighting was certainly no less intense.

Fighting in built-up areas brings a perplexing set of extra challenges to unit commanders. Buildings, even ones reduced to rubble, make superb fighting positions for defenders while attackers must contend with moving through open streets to advance. The confusing landscape of ruins and rubble was easy to get lost in and squads often found themselves pinned down or cut off with little idea of where friends and enemies might be. Even gaining entry to a defended building could be a miniature battle of its own with fighting room-to-room and floor-to-floor using grenades, bullets, and close combat to dislodge the defenders.

The city fighting rules are intended to supplement the rules for buildings on page 120 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook by laying out a number of additional challenges.



Hungarians and Germans fight desperately to hold back the Soviets

THE CITY AS A BATTLEFIELD

The kind of terrain pieces you have available to make up your city battlefield will dictate a lot about how it all fits together in terms of the rules. Some players like to construct modular boards with built-in ruins, buildings and other features. Others have baseboards with features – particularly ‘sunk-in’ ones – like streets and canals, but with separate buildings that can be removed for ease of transport and storage. The third approach is the simplest one – as many buildings and ruins as possible placed on a suitably coloured/textured mat.

For the purposes of city fighting the terrain on the tabletop counts as one of four types:

- Rubble
- Buildings
- Roads
- Open Ground

RUBBLE

When buildings are destroyed they leave behind a big pile of rubble. Attackers found that, if anything, rubble was even worse to assault than the buildings it had replaced; instead of having obvious doors and windows to cover as they

advanced, they found defenders might be lurking literally anywhere. Moving across large piles of loose rubble could be tricky, especially for multi-ton tanks!

MOVEMENT IN RUBBLE

Rubble counts as rough ground for movement purposes, but it offers additional perils for tracked vehicles moving across it. Tracked vehicles attempting to pick their way across irregular mounds of brick and concrete may slide sideways, ‘belly out’, or even crash through into cellars, sewers or other hidden voids beneath the rubble.

When a tracked vehicle is going to move across rubble that is above half the height of the vehicle model itself, declare their intended move and then roll on the Rubble table the moment they start moving onto the rubble.

Rubble Movement Table	
D6 Roll	Result
0 or lower	Crash: The vehicle crashes through the rubble and into a cellar or sewer beneath. The vehicle is removed and it counts as destroyed.
1–2	Bellied: The vehicle becomes temporarily immobilised by a protruding obstacle pushing against its belly armour and preventing the tracks from gripping. Roll another D6 to determine how far the vehicle actually moves across the rubble this turn before it becomes immobilised until its next activation. The vehicle never moves past the rubble even if the roll would take it beyond. Any shooting at the vehicle from the front that rolls a natural 6 to hit will strike its exposed belly armour (counts as rear armour). The vehicle can attempt to move across rubble again next turn.
3–4	Slipped: The vehicle moves a short distance before slipping awkwardly, sideways or backwards. Roll another D6 to determine how far the vehicle actually moves across the rubble this turn. The vehicle can attempt to move across rubble again next turn.
5–6	Crunch: With its engine roaring and treads clattering the vehicle is free to move across the rubble without any incident this turn.
Rubble Modifiers Heavy or super-heavy tank: -2 Light or medium tank: -1 Inexperienced crew: -1 Veteran crew: +1	



German Panzergrenader squad

SHOOTING IN RUBBLE

The plentiful hiding places rubble provides means the hit modifier it provides for infantry occupying it depends on a unit's current orders, as it is very important what a squad is actually supposed to be doing when they come under fire inside rubble.

Rubble counts as hard cover when shot across at targets behind it, but when shooting against a unit that has the majority of its models inside the rubble, the following modifiers apply instead of the normal -2 hard cover modifier.

Shooting in Rubble Table	
Target Orders	To Hit Modifier
No orders, Ambush, or Down*	-3
Fire or Rally	-2
Advance	-1
*Cumulative with the Down Modifier.	

BUILDINGS

See the *Bolt Action* rulebook for rules on buildings. As mentioned there are any building that is more than 8" x 8" in size should be regarded as two (or more) buildings for game purposes. If you're lucky enough to have buildings models with interior details it can work well to treat each room, hallway and staircase as a separate 'building' in the case of a city fight.



Soviet flamethrower team

ROADS AND OPEN GROUND

Roads and areas of open ground represent a rare opportunity for fast movement inside a city, but they can also be a deadly trap for units brought under fire. Hard surfaces can channel or reflect bullets, blasts and shrapnel, and this, along with a stark absence of cover, means casualty rates are much higher in urban environments.

When rolling to damage infantry or soft-skinned vehicles that are on roads or open ground in a city fight add +1 pen.

SEWER MOVEMENT

Outflanking units can also opt to try and move through the city sewers so that they can emerge just about anywhere. Only infantry units can use sewer movement.

The order test penalty to arrive when using sewer movement is doubled to -2 instead of the usual -1. If the test is successfully passed the unit may use an *Advance* or *Run* order to move onto the table from any ground-level point on the tabletop that is more than 6" away from any enemy model. Units entering the table using sewer movement may not assault the turn they arrive.

If a FUBAR result is rolled by a unit attempting to use sewer movement it gets hopelessly lost, suffocates, or triggers a booby trap. The unfortunate unit is destroyed.

COMMAND AND CONTROL IN A CITY FIGHT

Another effect of urban terrain was the difficulty of maintaining adequate command and control, which was compounded by uncertain movement and

high casualty rates. The chaotic landscape conspired to make runners and radios unreliable. Individual units could become pinned down for hours waiting for orders or support. Snipers, infiltrators, booby traps, and an uncertain front line would quickly dissipate any forward momentum and wreck any chance of a coordinated attack. Action soon devolved into sporadic squad versus squad engagements over a single building or landmark.

To represent the effects of command breakdown, the players may agree to use the following rule in a city fight scenario: at the end of the first turn, one of each player's units must remain on *Down* or *Ambush* orders and their die is not returned to the cup. If none of a player's units are currently on *Down* or *Ambush* orders, the opposing player may select one unit at the end of the turn and change their orders to *Ambush* or *Down* (in which case the unit immediately loses a pin marker if it had one), Headquarters units may never be chosen for this purpose as their motivation and communications are generally superior.

This command breakdown effect is cumulative, so at the end of the second turn two units must remain on *Down* or *Ambush* orders, at the end of the third turn three units must remain on *Down* or *Ambush* and so on.

The intended effect is that both players will have a shrinking number of units to activate each turn, but it doesn't limit exactly which units you can activate. This means a well-placed (or lucky unit) might be able to push deep into the enemy lines, but with fewer and fewer supporting units.

Because Headquarters units are immune to this rule, a player's number of available order dice will never drop below their number of surviving Headquarters units. So, stack up on officers, medics, and observers when going into a city – you're going to need them!



Germany Army Schwimmwagen

CITY SIEGE ASSETS

Some urban fighting dragged on for so long that the battle for the city essentially became a siege. Budapest was one of the prime examples of this, with 108 days of combat between its encirclement and the final capitulation of the defenders. By the end of the siege, approximately 75% of the city's buildings had either been totally destroyed or heavily damaged. The ruins were transformed into crumbling fortresses that prolonged the defence. In these grim battles the defenders had time to develop formidable defences and deploy all sorts of dirty tricks to cause casualties in the attackers ranks. In turn, the attackers were able to innovate and develop their own strategies to overcome their desperate opponents. Other bitter urban sieges of the Second World War include Kharkov, Stalingrad, Manila, Caen, Aachen, and Berlin.

City Siege Assets are offered as an additional resource for players to choose from to add an extra layer of strategy and enhance your games of *Bolt Action* in this specific setting. These assets are selected to add to your army list, and the number of them is determined by the size of the game you are playing. One asset is selected per 500pts, rounding down, in a player's army list. Note that these assets do not cost any points themselves.

There are three categories of City Siege Assets to choose from. This is determined by what role each player takes in the scenario being played. Attacker resources are only available to the attacker in the scenario being played, likewise for the defender options, with the neutral ones always being available to both players. If the scenario has no attacker or defender, the neutral assets are always available and can be chosen from by both players. Note you can pick and choose from two categories as long as the total assets don't exceed your limit. Also note that some assets may be chosen multiple times, in larger games for example, and these will be noted in their description.



Men of the Vannay Battalion use the sewer culverts to infiltrate behind enemy lines

ATTACKER'S ASSETS

Preliminary Bombardment

The player benefits from a pre-game preliminary bombardment using the rules on page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Note that the bombardment is automatic and no roll is needed to see if it occurs.



Soviet SMG squad

Smoke Screen

The player benefits from a smoke bombardment using the rules on page 84 of

the *Bolt Action* rulebook for Forward Artillery Observers. Note the aiming point can be anywhere on the battlefield as there is no observer to draw line of sight from. The smoke bombardment is rolled for at the start of the turn in the exact same way as for artillery observers.

Big Push

The player receives a free infantry unit, identical to the cheapest one already in their army list.

Night Infiltration

Two of the player's infantry units gain the forward deployment rules as used by snipers and spotters on page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

Prisoner Interrogations

D3 of the defender's units, as chosen by the attacker, lose their Hidden status. This happens after all units have set up but before the game begins.

DEFENDER'S ASSETS

Fortified Building

Choose a building on the table, all infantry or artillery units inside the building add a further +1 to the extra protection offered by the building up to a maximum of 6+ to wound.

Street Barricades

The defending player receives D3 6" linear hard cover obstacles that can be deployed on any streets outside the opponent's deployment zone. These must be set up before any units are deployed from either side.

Minefields

The defending player receives one 6" x 6" minefield, this can either be an anti-tank minefield or anti-personnel minefield as per the rules [here](#). This asset may be taken multiple times, with each selection granting one minefield. If multiple minefields are chosen these can be swapped for a single mixed minefield. which can be deployed on any streets or open ground outside the opponent's deployment zone. These must be set up before any units are deployed from either side.

Tank Traps

The defending player received D3 6" x 3" anti-tank obstacles, which can be

deployed on any streets or open ground outside the opponent's deployment zone. These must be set up before any units are deployed from either side.

NEUTRAL ASSETS

Sewer Infiltration

Any of the players infantry units may enter the table using the sewer movement rules [here](#).

Snipers

The player is allowed to purchase one additional sniper to what is normally allowed by the generic reinforced platoon or Theatre Selector being used.

Molotov Cocktails

One of the players infantry units is now upgraded to be equipped with AT grenades at no extra cost. This asset may be selected multiple times, each selection grants one squad the AT grenades upgrade.

Ammunition Dump

Choose a building on the table, this building now grants a benefit to one of the defender's infantry or artillery units inside the building or within 6" of it each turn. When given a fire or advance order the unit can re-roll any ones when resolving its shooting attack. A different unit can be chosen from turn to turn.

Frontline Aid Post

Choose a building on the table, all of the defender's infantry or artillery units inside the building, or within 6", gain the same benefit as having a medic within 6". See page 84 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook for details on the effects of a medic.

SNOW AND MUD

A defining feature of the war in the East was the powerful effect of the seasons on the combatants. During the summer, heat, thirst, and dust were additional enemies to be fought; during spring and autumn, nature's foes became the torrential rain and subsequent clinging mud. Harshest of all was the winter, when ice, snow, and frostbite conspired to disable men and machines at a frightening rate. The bitter cold alone could inflict terrible casualties on ill-prepared troops caught in the grip of the harsh Russian winter. During the Winter War in Finland, Red Army frostbite casualties exceeded 10% and the Axis suffered equally in the drive on Moscow in 1941. The following additional rules reflect the additional effects of winter conditions.



German Army MMG team

SNOW

Thick, heavy snowfalls are commonplace in continental Russia. In the depths of winter, special precautions had to be taken to ensure that roads did not vanish entirely underneath drifting snow and travelling off-road was virtually impossible except by soldiers on foot (at great effort) or tracked vehicles.

In rules terms, areas of snow are treated as rough ground. This means that infantry and tracked vehicles are limited to making advance moves in snow, while artillery and wheeled vehicles may not move in it at all. Soviet tanks featured notably wider tracks than their opponents to assist with moving in snow and are not subject to this rule. Likewise, ski-troops and aerosans rely on snowy conditions so treat areas of snow as open ground for movement purposes.



Soviet Squad in snow suits

MUD

The autumn rains and the spring meltdown of the winter snows created vast quagmires of deep mud on the Eastern Front, and the roads were normally no more than dirt tracks, which turned into near-unusable rivers of mud as the advancing columns trod onto them with increasing difficulty before getting completely bogged down. Infantry and tracked vehicles could deal better with the mud (at least in the short timescale represented by a *Bolt Action* engagement), but wheeled vehicles really struggled. Areas of mud are normally treated as difficult ground in *Bolt Action*. However, if you like to add an element of randomness, you can agree with your opponent to use the rules below for vehicles and artillery units moving across areas of mud – vehicles and artillery units treat mud as open ground, but any such unit whose movement is going to cross a section of mud must declare their intended move and then roll on the deep mud table the moment they start moving onto the mud.

Deep Mud Table	
Die Roll	Result
0	Buried deep: The unit cannot move for the rest of the game.
1–2	Bogged down: The unit has to stop, losing grip on the ground. The unit moves into the mud and then immediately stops (or does not move at all if it started the move in mud). The unit also suffers an extra -1 modifier to this roll the next time it moves.
3–4	Struggle: The efforts to cross this section of mud are very troublesome for your vehicle's traction. Vehicles continue with their move normally, but can only move through a maximum of 6" of mud as part of their move, after which they must stop. The same goes for artillery units, except that they can move only up to 2".
5–6	Fairly solid going: This area was not as deep and soft as you thought. The unit continues with its move normally.

Deep Mud modifiers	
Fully tracked vehicle	+1
Half-track	0
Wheeled vehicle, artillery	-1



8th SS Cavalry Division Panzerschreck team

MINEFIELDS

Minefields became a major factor in the Great Patriotic War. Anywhere that the battle lines began to stabilise, or major defences were sited, quickly sprouted its own crop of mines, while retreating troops left veritable devil's gardens of booby traps and mines in their wake. Behind the lines, partisans used mines to make travelling on any road by night a potentially risky prospect. Detection was no simple matter either. The Red Army had a great fondness for wooden 'cigar box' mines, and old battlefields being fought over often contained such a wealth of shrapnel and scrap metal that mine detectors were useless.

As the war went on, both sides honed their skills with mines to new levels of frightfulness. At Kursk, for example, the Soviets laid a million mines during the spring so that their tripwires and pressure plates were completely hidden by vegetation in summer. During the battle they also had special 'mobile obstacle detachments' dedicated to laying fresh minefields overnight in the predicted directions of advance the German panzers would take the next day. For their part German pioneers 'subverted' minefields by moving mines onto paths the Soviets had left clear for themselves.

MINEFIELD RULES

Players can decide to add minefields to any of their games, as long as they agree beforehand. Usually the defender in a scenario can deploy mines, since attackers are pushing into a new area and have not had the opportunity.

Initially, we are going to provide rules for visible, marked minefields, as we assume that both sides are adhering to the Geneva Convention and marking their minefields. We shall also deal by default with antipersonnel mines, as they are the most common. Later on, we'll also provide rules for anti-tank minefields.



Soviet IS-2 heavy tank in winter camouflage

MINEFIELD SECTIONS

The default minefield section in *Bolt Action* is a 6" x 6" square area. Larger minefields can be made by placing several of these sections next to each other. Normally, we tend to allow the defender in a scenario two minefield sections per full 1,000 points of their force.

Or, if you prefer, you can allow a certain amount of points to be spent on minefields (up to 10% of the force total) and say that each section costs 50pts.

A minefield section can either be a cardboard base appropriately decorated, much like an area of rough ground, or can be delimited ad hoc before a game using four 6" long obstacles (like a 6" length of barbed wire), or even simply using four counters set up at 6" distance to mark the corners of the minefield.

EFFECT OF MINEFIELDS

When any unit (friend or foe) moves into a minefield section, the opponent can interrupt their movement once at any point during their move, just as if the minefield itself was in *Ambush*. When the opponent declares that the minefield is 'attacking' the unit, the controlling player must halt at that point and note how much movement the unit has left. Assuming the unit survives its encounter with the minefield, it will finish its move as normal.

After the unit has been positioned at its ambush point, the opponent rolls one die to see if the unit triggers a mine, effectively rolling to hit the unit with the

minefield section itself. A minefield section needs a 3+ to hit an Inexperienced unit, 4+ for a Regular unit, and 5+ for a Veteran unit.

Units belonging to the player that placed the minefield are supposed to know the location of the mines, so they can force the opponent to re-roll any successful hit, as long as they are moving at an *Advance*. Also, units of combat engineers (engineers, pioneers, etc.) are trained to deal with these obstacles and always benefit from this re-roll when moving at an *Advance*, even when crossing the enemy's minefields.

If any unit (including friends and engineers) is sufficiently foolhardy to cross a minefield at a *Run*, the minefield rolls three dice when ambushing the unit rather than one!

If the minefield misses with all of its dice, the unit has not triggered a mine and can finish its move normally. If the minefield scores hits, then each successful hit is resolved with a penetration value of +2 against nonarmoured targets and +3 against armoured targets (damage roll of 7+). Roll to damage as normal. A unit that is hit also suffers D3 pin markers rather than just one. Note that the higher value Pen against armoured targets reflects the fact that the anti-personnel mine hits the weakly armoured belly of the vehicle – not normally considered from the point of view of other hits.

If the unit is not destroyed, or broken by a resulting morale check, it can finish its move as normal. ' Note that a single minefield section can attack a unit only once per move, but can attack any number of units moving over it during the turn. Also, if a unit was foolish enough to cross two (or more!) minefield sections as part of the same move, each section can ambush it in turn.

ANTI-TANK MINEFIELDS

At the beginning of the game, you may secretly write down that any of your minefields is an anti-tank minefield. Anti-tank minefields only affect vehicles, and are ignored by infantry and artillery units that move over them. However, hits inflicted on vehicles are at +5 Pen rather than the normal +2.

MIXED MINEFIELDS

You can also create a mixed minefield section by 'using up' two of your sections. So, if for example you were allowed two sections in the scenario being played, you can lay both out as anti-tank or anti-personnel minefields, or deploy a single, mixed minefield. Make a note of which minefields are mixed.

A mixed minefield section combines the best of both worlds and will affect infantry and artillery with +2 Pen hits, but vehicles with +5 Pen hits.

CLEARING MINEFIELDS

Once a minefield section has scored one or more hits on a unit passing over it, the opposing player rolls a die. On the roll of a 6, the minefield is cleared. If the unit that was hit was a vehicle with damage value 8 or more, the minefield is instead cleared on a 4+. This represents any subsequent troops either following in the tracks of the first or moving over craters left by previously exploded mines.

A cleared minefield is left in place, but from that point onwards the minefield only ever scores hits on a 6, regardless of the quality of the troops crossing it, and always rolls a single die 'to hit', even against units moving at a Run. Re-rolls for friends and engineers still apply. This represents hurried mine clearance under fire, which is not exactly a thorough process, and might definitely leave a few isolated mines behind.

Thankfully, there are alternative means of clearing a minefield other than walking your infantry or driving your tanks over it. These are listed below with their rules.



Axis reinforcements are caught in an ambush

MANUAL MINE CLEARANCE BY INFANTRY

Any infantry unit that has at least five models inside a minefield can be ordered to attempt to clear it using their bayonets. The unit must be given a special ‘mine clearing’ order, which is the same as giving the unit a *Down* order – place a Down marker next to the unit and then make a ‘mine clearing roll’ applying all of the modifiers below. In order to clear the minefield section, the result needs to be a 6 after modifications. Note that a natural 6 is always a success and a natural 1 is always a failure. In addition, if a natural 1 is rolled, the minefield section ambushes the unit as normal (and in this case, an anti-tank minefield does affect the tampering infantry!).

Mine Clearing Table	
Modifier	Value
Veterans	+1
Inexperienced	-1
Engineers	+1
Mine-clearing gear*	+2
Per pin marker on unit	-1
*Any engineer unit may be equipped before the game with mine-clearing gear (Bangalore Torpedoes, mine detectors, etc.) at a cost of +1pt per model. At least one of the models should show this upgrade. Modifiers are cumulative	

BLOWING IT UP!

Any weapon capable of indirect fire can target a visible minefield section. Aim for the centre point of the section and roll to hit as normal (including ranging in for successive shots). If a hit is scored, roll for the HE value of the weapon – if you score at least six hits on the minefield with a single shot, the minefield section is cleared.

When resolving an artillery barrage ‘Fire for effect’ result, roll a die for each minefield section within range of the barrage (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6, the minefield section is hit by a heavy howitzer as normal, and if you score at least six hits on it, it is cleared.

When firing a preparatory bombardment, roll a die for each minefield section in the defender’s set-up zone (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6 that minefield section is cleared.



Soviet Anti-tank rifle teams

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