



**Anniversary
of the Great Victory**

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In Russia, the term the Great Patriotic War describes the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany backed by its European allies, which lasted from the Nazi invasion of 22 June 1941 until Germany signed its unconditional surrender on 9 May 1945. The historical term itself, the Great Patriotic War, originates from the famous radio address by the Soviet leadership to the people of the Soviet Union of 3 July 1941, calling for the entire nation to rise and repel the invaders. However, among the English-speaking audience the Great Patriotic War is a largely unknown name, these events are usually referred to as the Eastern Front of World War II. The Russians and other former Soviet peoples continue to use the title– the Great Patriotic War – as for them that War was a Battle for the freedom and independence of their Motherland, a War for their very existence...

Anniversary of the Great Victory

The year 2015 marked 70 years since the Great Victory over the Nazi Germany. The memory of this war, referred to as the Great Patriotic War in our country, is deeply revered, and special importance is attached to the day of May 9 1945, when the Nazi Germany surrender took effect. This date has since become a Russian national holiday – Victory Day – and is commemorated annually in a grand military parade on the Red Square in Moscow.

Russia paid a very high price for the Victory. It's impossible to find a single family which didn't experience the gravity of personal loss. The overall death toll suffered by the USSR is estimated at about 26,6 million, accounting for half of all WW2 casualties (for comparison, the U.S. lost 325 thousand).—most of them civilians and non-combatants. In 1944 the length of the Soviet-German front was four times greater than that of all the fronts where the USSR's Allies fought put together. An even better comparison: up to 201



Alexey Kovalev raising the Soviet Victory Banner over the Reichstag, Berlin

enemy divisions fought on the Eastern Front, whereas only 21 divisions opposed the US-British troops. Even after the opening of the Second Front the Allies had 1.5 million men in Western Europe, while the number of opposing German troops amounted to 560 000 men. At the same time 4.5 million German troops were amassed on the Soviet-German front, opposing 6.5 million Soviet soldiers. The Hitlerite forces sustained their major losses

in the battles against the Red Army, accounting for 70% of their manpower losses and 75% of all their military equipment – tanks, guns and aircraft—destroyed,

Even the architect of the Cold War, Sir W.Churchill, who was far from being a fan of the Soviet Union, acknowledged that «it was the Russian army who tore the guts out of the German war machine».

Having said all that I must stress that in our minds we

never divided the Victory into percentages back in 1945, nor do we divide it now. The Second World War was won by the Anti-Hitler Coalition. It is imperative to remember that it is humanity's common Victory.

However, the main outcome of the war goes well beyond a pure victory of one coalition of States over the other. In its essence it was a triumph of the forces of civilization over the forces of destruction and barbarity, Victory of life over death. It is unique a page of human history that must remain in our memory and hearts. —never to repeat the same mistakes again. The recent rise of Neonazism and facist movements all over the world is most troubling. The legal and moral verdict on who was right, and who was wrong, was delivered by the Nuremberg tribunal, it is final and unchangeable.

M.PETRAKOV

Ambassador of the

Russian Federation to the Republic of South Africa



THE IMMORTAL REGIMENT

Millions of people unite in commemorating the memories of those who took part in the Great Patriotic War, sacrificing their lives, health and everything dear to them for the future generations — for us.

The idea behind the Immortal regiment event is to bring a photo of a family member who participated in the Great Patriotic War in order to show that their sacrifice is not forgotten and memory of their deeds lives on.

The 'Immortal Regiment' March was initially created and run by civil activists in the Russian city of Tomsk in 2012. 6 thousand people marched together on 9 May 2012. With

each year more and more people became aware of the initiative, and each year's event an ever greater number of participants.

2015 was special as it marked the 70th Anniversary of the Victory. The organizers of the March called on everyone who want to pay tribute to their relatives perished during the years of the War, to take to the streets across Russia in a symbolic action.

Moscow hosted the largest March. According to Moscow City Police about 500,000 people participated in the event. The photographs the participants were holding above their heads showed people who died near Moscow in 1941 and in the fierce battles around the town of Rzhev in 1942, who liberated Ukraine from Nazi enslavement and seized Berlin, who worked at factories as teenagers making footwear or medical attendance items for the front-

line hospitals, or who died in concentration camps.

President Vladimir Putin joined the head of the vast column that reached Red Square. The Russian leader held a photograph of his father, who fought in the Great Patriotic War.

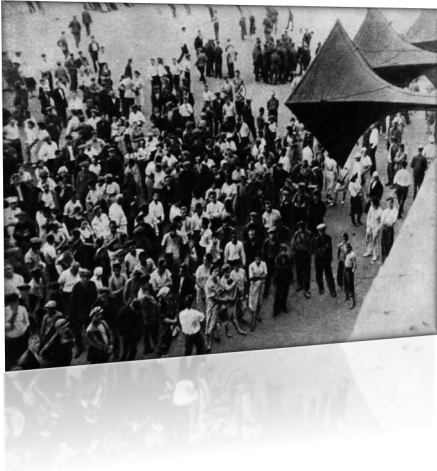
"I think that my father, like millions of ordinary soldiers, and he was an ordinary soldier, has all the right to walk through this square," President Putin told the journalists.

Nikolai Zemtsov, the head of the "Immortal Regiment" patriotic movement said that according to estimates around 12 million people participated in the march all over Russia.

Since 2015 the movement has only grown in scale. Immortal Regiment events now regularly take place all over the world - in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Israel, Germany, Austria, USA, Mongolia, Norway, Ireland, Estonia, Ukraine, etc.

The Great Patriotic War

Chronology



On 22 June 1941 without a declaration of war Nazi Germany launched an offensive against the USSR .

On the same day Vyachelsav Molotov addressed the citizens of the Soviet Union in what would be later known as a historic speech:

«Today at 4 o'clock a.m., without any claims having been presented to the Soviet Union, without a declaration of war, German troops attacked our country, attacked our borders at many points and bombed our cities from their airplanes.

This attack upon our country is perfidy unparalleled in the history of civilized nations. The attack on our country was perpetrated despite the fact that a treaty of non-aggression had been signed between the USSR and Germany and that the Soviet Government most faithfully abided by all provisions of this treaty.»

Battle of Moscow, October-December 1941

Despite fierce opposition from the Soviets the German troops advanced rapidly and by fall 1941 were approaching Moscow in force. The Soviet Command fully understood the strategic and psychological importance of the capital and organized its strategic defence by constructing three defensive belts, and deploying new reserves and troops from Siberia and the Far East.

These tactics proved to be successful and after the German offensives were halted, a Soviet counter-offensive was executed forcing the Nazis back to their positions around the cities of Vyazma, Oryol and Vitebsk.

During the battle the Soviet Government remained in Moscow despite numerous pledges to relocate. The embassies had being evacuated to Kuibyshev (modern Samara) by then. On 7 November 1941 on the anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution a massive military parade was held on the Red Square under direct threats of German air strikes, showing resolve of the Soviet people in defending their homeland.



Battle of Stalingrad, August 1942— February 1943

The Battle of Stalingrad is considered to be the most important battle in the entirety of World War II and its true turning point. It is also viewed as the single largest and bloodiest battle in the history of warfare.

Despite the failure of Operation Barbarossa (initial German plan to swiftly defeat the USSR in a single campaign), by fall 1942 the Germans captured vast territories in the West of the Soviet Union. The Nazis suffered a setback during the Battle of Moscow and Soviet counter-offensives but managed to regroup and amassed forces for a new major offensive, this time aimed at cutting off the strategic Volga river route.

With great losses by mid November the Germans managed to push Soviet forces into narrow zones along the west bank of the Volga river. On 19 November 1943 the Red Army launched Operation Uranus, targeting the flanks of the German 6th Army, effectively cutting it off and surrounding. For two months intense fighting ensued until the Germans surrendered.

As a result of intensive Luftwaffe bombing, aimed at civilians as well as the Soviet troops, the city of Stalingrad was effectively reduced to rubble by February 1943 . The battle also featured unprecedentedly fierce close quarters combat with fights raging over every street, house and ruins. Even sewers were sites of firefights. The Mamayev Kurgan, a prominent hill above the city, became the stage for the most merciless combat, changing hands many times.



A Soviet platoon under command of Sergeant Pavlov fended off Germans in what will later be known as the Pavlov's house for two months

The Round Dance fountain is a legendary Stalingrad landmark. It was fully restored in 2013 to commemorate 70th Anniversary of the battle



Battle of Kursk, July-August 1943

The Battle of Kursk is often labeled as the second most important World War II battle and to this days remains the largest tank battle in history. It was initially a German offensive code-named Operation Citadel, the last concentrate effort by the Nazis to turn the war around. The attempt ultimately failed and the USSR gained a strategic victory and the initiative for the rest of the war. It was the first time in Second World War that German strategic offensive was halted even before it could break through enemy defences.

The Leningrad Blockade (Siege of Leningrad), September 1941- January 1944

The Leningrad Blockade also known as the Siege of Leningrad is one of the most tragic and horrific pages of human history. By late August 1941 the German armies advanced far in the territory of the Soviet Union and reached the outskirts of second-largest city of the USSR, former capital of the Russian Empire, the city of Leningrad. On 8 September the Nazis severed the last main road into the city and the most lethal siege in world's history began. It lasted for 872 days and ultimately cost *over a million civilian lives*. As the city was also blocked by the Nazi's satellite Finnish forces in the north, the only remaining route to evacuate population and bring in supplies was the so-called «Road of Life» - a narrow route on the ice-covered Onega Lake which was intensely bombarded by German Air Force.

The siege was finally lifted on 27 January 1944, having caused colossal loss of human lives but failing to break the spirit of Leningrad's defenders.



The famous Bronze Horseman statue of Peter the Great was disguised as a rural building to prevent it from being destroyed by the German air bombing aids.



Vienna citizens greet Soviet soldiers and celebrate the liberation from the Nazis

Liberation of Europe, 1944-1945

By summer 1944 the Red Army had finally liberated the Soviet territory from the Nazis and proceeded to defeating Germany and its satellites on their own ground while liberating the peoples of the Eastern and Central Europe from the occupation.

It took several months and many lives of both Soviet soldiers and resistance fighters to finally free all the Nazi-controlled territories and remove pro-Nazi governments in German satellite-states. Poland and Hungary were among the hardest to liberate due to well-organized defence lines and persistence of the Axis troops.

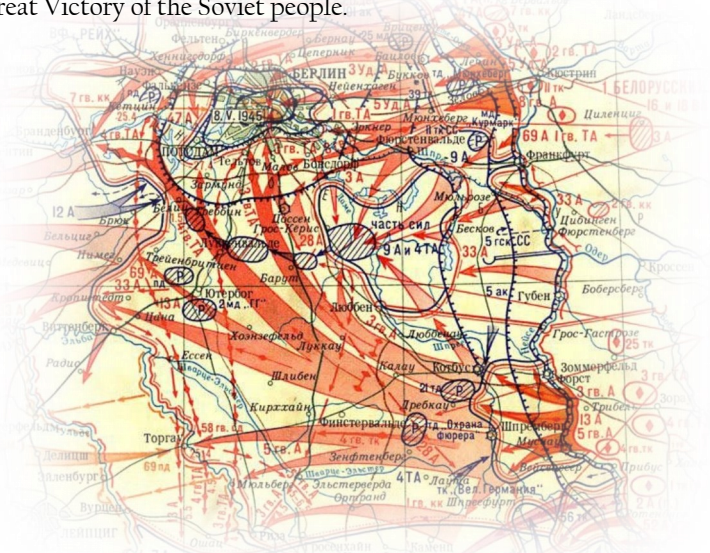
Battle of Berlin, April-May 1945

The Battle of Berlin or the Berlin Strategic Offensive Operation began 16 April 1945. It represents the final and one of the toughest battles of the war. Germans bolstered their defenses as much as they could and used the advantage of close quarters combat to slow down the advance of the Red Army, which by that time managed to encircle the city completely.

The city's Nazi defenders, including those in Reichstag surrendered on 2 May, however the fighting continued in some parts of the German capital until 8 May. The Battle for the Reichstag was a particular intense and psychologically important part of the struggle marking the ultimate fall of Nazi Germany and the Great Victory of the Soviet people.



Marshals Zhukov and Tedder sign the German Instrument of Surrender on behalf of the USSR and the Allied Expeditionary Force, 8 May 1945, Berlin



From Moscow to Berlin: A Historical Photo-Journey



26 July 1941, Moscow — Soviet anti-aircraft units are hard at work to repel the attack of the Nazi air force during the air bombing raid on Moscow with the Kremlin being among the primary targets

Historic parade on November 7, 1941. The troops marched from the Red Square straight to the frontline to defend Moscow from the Nazis



This picture taken by the Soviet photographer Max Alpert is one of the most famous photos of WWII and has quite a story behind it. It is officially titled 'Combat' as it was said to depict a "Commander of a battalion" but according to Alpert's own account that was likely an inaccurate assumption on his part. The hero on the photo has remained unknown for a long time until a journalist investigation in the 1970s revealed him to be a political commissar of his unit by the surname Yeryomenko. When the 'combat' got wounded, he took command and raised the unit for a counterattack against the German offence. He died within minutes after that



July 1944, Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic — Soviet 152-mm howitzer artillery unit is shelling German positions in a final push to free the Motherland

Dzhulbars, the famous sapper dog. It served throughout the whole Great Patriotic War, from 1941 to 1945, having found over 7 thousand mines and 150 active shells



The Minsk Offensive, part of Operation Bagration, was a great success commonly attributed to both brilliant planning by the Soviet Command and heroic dedication of the soldiers

As a tribute of respect to its heroic deeds Dzhulbars took part in the Victory Parade of 1945. Unfortunately it got wounded in the last days of war and couldn't walk so it was carried by officers.



May 1945, Berlin — The Reichstag building was heavily fortified by the Nazis in an attempt to make a 'last stand' against the Red Army. The Soviet troops finally gained full control of the building on 2 May. It quickly became a prominent symbol of Victory. To this day one can find many graffiti and inscriptions made by Soviet soldiers marking their long journey from repelling the invaders from their homeland to defeating them in the 'heart' of Germany, and also commemorating those who did not survive to see the Victory



The Moscow Victory Parade of 1945 was an emblematic event that symbolised the end of the most bloody war in history for the Soviet people, their Victory over the ultimate Nazi evil and return to normal peaceful life.

Marshals Georgy Zhukov, who had formally accepted the German surrender to the Soviet Union, and Konstantin Rokossovsky, rode through the parade ground on white and black stallions, respectively. It is widely viewed that the ceremony of throwing down the banners of Nazi Germany military units next to the mausoleum. Was one of the centerpieces of the parade. One of the standards that was tossed down belonged to the 1st SS Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, Hitler's personal bodyguards. This historic two-hour parade remains the longest and largest military parade in Red Square's history, as it involved 40,000 soldiers and 1,850 military vehicles and other military hardware.



Soldiers finally return to their families, villages and hometowns after years of a devastating war

The events of the Great Patriotic War left many scars in the lives of Soviet people. There wasn't a family left untouched by the war, everyone had relatives who didn't return from the battlefields, died in concentration camps or was killed in anti-civilian atrocities of the Nazis. Words can hardly describe the relief people felt when the war had finally come to an end and fathers, brothers and children returned to their families. These photos might give you a glimpse into these touching moments of reunion

How the Russians took Berlin single-handedly



The Battle of Berlin was one of the largest battles in human history. It began on April 16 in the outskirts of the city. By April 25, Soviet troops had entered the Third Reich's capital. About 3.5 million soldiers from both sides participated in the fight with more than 50,000 weapons and 10,000 tanks.

Hitler's troops worked desperately to defend themselves with two lines of defense organized in Berlin. Many homes were equipped with bunkers and these houses, with their thick walls, became impregnable strongholds. Of particular danger for the advancing Soviet troops were the anti-tank weapons, bazookas and hand grenades since Soviet forces were heavily reliant on the use of armored vehicles during the attack. In this environment of urban warfare, many tanks were destroyed.

Berlin was captured by Soviet troops on three fronts. The most difficult task fell to the soldiers from the First Belarus Front, commanded by Georgy Zhukov, who had to charge the well-fortified

German position in Seelow Heights on the outskirts of the city. The attack began during the night of April 16 with an unprecedentedly powerful and coordinated artillery barrage. Then, without waiting for morning, tanks entered the battle supported by the infantry. The offensive was conducted with the help of floodlights, which were set up behind the advancing troops. Even with the use of this clever tactic, several days were needed to seize Seelow Heights.

The tactics used in the Battle of Berlin built on experience from the Battle of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops established special assault units, in which tanks played a critical role. Typically, maneuvers were carried out in the following manner: The infantry moved along both sides of the street, checking the windows on both sides, to identify obstacles that were dangerous for the vehicles, such as camouflaged weapons, barricades and tanks embedded in the ground. If the troops noticed such impediments up ahead, the Soviet infantry would wait for the arrival of their self-propelled tanks and self-propelled howitzers. Once this support arrived, the armored vehicles would work to destroy German fortifications at point-blank range. However, there were situations

where the infantry could not keep up with the armored vehicles and consequently, the tanks were isolated from their cover and became easy prey for the German anti-tank weapons and artillery.



The culmination of the offensive on Berlin was the battle for the Reichstag, the German parliament building. At the time, it was the highest building in the city center and its capture had symbolic significance. The first attempt to seize the Reichstag on April 27 failed and the fighting continued for four more days.

The turning point occurred on April 29 as Soviet troops took possession of the fortified Interior Ministry building, which occupied an entire block. The Soviets finally captured the Reichstag on the evening of April 30. Early in the morning of May 1, the flag of the 150th Rifle division was raised over the building. This was later referred to as the Banner of Victory.

The battle for Berlin was the last step towards the end of Great Patriotic War and marked the fall of inhuman racist Nazi regime. On April 30, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. Until the last moment, he was hoping that troops from other parts of Germany would come to his aid, but this did not happen. The last German troops in Berlin surrendered on May 2 which resulted in final defeat of Nazis in the WW2.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines) & Russia's Embassy Staff

Elbe Day: A handshake that made history

Elbe Day, April 25, 1945, is the day Soviet and American troops met at the River Elbe. This contact between the Soviets, advancing from the East, and the Americans, advancing from the West, meant that the two powers had effectively cut Germany in two.

For years, Soviet troops had been inching slowly westward, pushing Nazi troops back all along the Eastern Front. On June 6, 1944, D-Day, American and British troops opened a second front in Europe and began fighting the Nazis on the ground from the West.

Finally, on April 25, 1945, Soviet and American troops cut through the Wehrmacht divisions and met in the middle of Germany near the town of Torgau, 85 miles from Berlin, on the Elbe River. The allied forces had effectively cut Germany in two.

That Soviet and American troops would meet in this general area was known, and signals had even been worked out between the allied leaders at Yalta to indicate to the troops on either side that they were friendly. But the actual meeting itself was decided by fate. The moment, which came to be known as the Meeting on the Elbe, portended the end of the war in Europe, which came less than two short weeks later, when the Red Army stormed Berlin.

Lt. Bill Robertson of the 273th Regiment of the 69th Infantry Division, driving on the morning of April 25 into the town of Torgau, knew that he might encounter Soviet troops, and knew he should greet them as friends and allies. Gen. Courtney Hodges, Commander of the First U.S. Army, had told his men to "Treat them nicely." But Robertson was not prepared to carry out the protocol which was worked out several months before in Yalta.

The first American soldiers to make contact were to fire a green-colored star shell – the Soviets, a red one. Robertson and the three men in his patrol decided the best way to show they were Americans was to present an American flag. As they didn't have a flag, they found a white sheet and painted it as best they could to look like the stars-and-stripes.



the name of their descendants, the way to war must be blocked!"

On this partially destroyed bridge over the Elbe, the Soviet and American soldiers built a new one, between countries — a bridge of friendship.

That day, the soldiers met as comrades-in-arms, embraced each other, and exchanged buttons, stars and patches from each other's uniforms. Later, this exchange of "souvenirs" was carried out at the highest levels.



Soviet Lt. Alexander Sylvashko was skeptical at first that Robertson and his men were Americans. He thought the four men waving a colored sheet were Germans playing a trick on the Soviet troops. He fired a red star shell, but did not receive a green one in return.

Sylvashko sent one of his soldiers, a man named Andreev, to meet Robertson, in the center of a bridge crossing the Elbe. The two men awkwardly embraced and made the hand signal of "V for Victory."

The following day, a huge ceremony was held on the spot with dozens of soldiers from both sides. They swore an oath, in memory of those who had not made it so far:

"In the name of those who have fallen on the battlefields, those who have left this life and in

The First Victory Parade



On June 24, 1945 at 10:00 AM a parade to commemorate the Victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany and its allies in the Great Patriotic War took place in the Red Square, Moscow. To this day it is the longest and largest military parade ever held in the Red Square involving over 40000 soldiers and some 1850 military vehicles.

On June 22, 1945 major Soviet newspapers published the text of the Executive order of the Supreme Commander, Joseph Stalin: 'In commemoration of the victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War, I appoint to hold the parade of the regular Army, Navy and the Moscow garrison - Victory Parade June 24, 1945 in Moscow's Red Square.'

First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Deputy Supreme Commander, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Georgy Zhukov was appointed as the parade's inspector. The person in charge of the parade was none other than the commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front,

Marshal of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Rokossovsky.

Intensive preparations for the parade were held in Moscow throughout June. Rehearsal for infantry units took place in the Khodynka field, in the Central Terminal; artillery units rehearsed near the Sadovoye Kol'tso (Garden Ring), from the Crimean Bridge to the Smolensk Place; mechanized and armored vehicles crews prepared for the parade at the training grounds in Kuzminki.

Regiments representing every war front, active by the end of the war were formed and trained with commanders of the fronts leading them.

The famous 'Red Banner of Victory', hoisted over the Reichstag when Soviet forces reached Berlin, was brought from the German capital to the parade.

The formation of the parade was held in accordance with the general line of the active fronts: from right to left. Each regiment had its favorite military march played.

On the day of the parade Marshals of the Soviet Union,

Georgy Zhukov and Konstantin Rokossovsky appeared on Red Square on a white horse and a black horse respectively. After the command "Parade, quiet!" the square was swept with a roar of applause. Then, the combined military orchestra of 1400 musicians conducted by Major-General Sergei Chernetsky played the hymn "Glory to the Russian people!" by Mikhail Glinka. After that, the commander of the parade Rokossovsky reported on the readiness for the start of the parade. The marshals made a detour of troops, and returned to the Lenin Mausoleum. Zhukov congratulated "brave Soviet soldiers and all the Soviet people with the Great Victory over Nazi Germany. Then the anthem of the Soviet Union was played and a solemn march of the troops began.

The Victory Parade was attended by the regiments of the fronts, of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the Navy, military academies, colleges, and units of the Moscow garrison. Combined regiments included the rank and file, sergeants and officers of

different arms, who had distinguished themselves in battle and had been awarded with military orders.

Following the regiments of the fronts and the Navy, a combined column of Soviet soldiers carried 200 banners seized from the Nazi troops entered the Red Square. These banners were thrown to the foot of the Mausoleum as a sign of the aggressor's crushing defeat.

At 23:00 PM the sky over Moscow was lit up with searchlights and fireworks, hundreds of balloons were launched. A cloth with the image of the Order of "Victory", appeared in the sky in the searchlight's spotlight.

Holding a Victory Parade in the Red Square to commemorate the role of the Soviet people in defeating the Nazis has long become an important annual tradition, integral to the world-view of all Russians and other peoples of the former Soviet Union.

By Russia's Embassy Staff

Alexander Matrosov - A Symbol of Heroism

Alexander Matrosov was a legendary Soviet soldier who died heroically during the Great Patriotic War. His name has become a synonym of self-sacrifice in the name of the Motherland and its people.

Alexander Matrosov was born on 5 February 1924 in Dnepropetrovsk (the then Ekaterinoslav). His parents died when he was a little boy and Alexander was brought up in an orphanage. He got basic education at the Labour penal institution near Ufa, and later worked there as a teacher's assistant. In November 1942 Matrosov left for the front as a volunteer and served in the Soviet infantry.

According to an alternative research Alexander Matrosov's true name was Shakirian Mukhamedyanov, and he was in fact born in a small village in Bashkiria, Russia.

Whether he took the name or was born with it, multiple witnesses confirm that he always referred to himself as Alexander Matrosov.

Whatever the case, on 27 February 1943 in the battle for



a village near Pskov, Alexander Matrosov sacrificed his life by blocking a Nazi machine gun pillbox with his body. He disabled the machine gun, allowing his comrades to continue the attack and win the battle.

On 19 June 1943 Matrosov posthumously received the award of "the Hero of the Soviet Union". Impressed by the feat, Joseph Stalin wrote: 'The great deed of Alexander Matrosov should be an example of military valor and heroism for all the warriors of the Red Army.'

And indeed Matrosov's deed inspired many, such acts of heroism were not uncommon: over 300 soldiers repeated Matrosov's feat.

By Russia's Embassy Staff



Auschwitz in the memories of its liberators and its liberated



On January 27, 1945 the Soviet Army, under the command of Marshal Ivan Konev, put an end to the largest concentration camp of the Third Reich.

Auschwitz prisoners were liberated by four Red Army infantry divisions. The vanguard was composed of fighters from the 107th and 100th divisions. Major Anatoly Shapiro served in the latter division. His shock troops were the first to open the camp's gates. He remembers:

In the second half of the day we entered the camp's territory and walked through the main gate, on which a slogan written with wire hung: "Work sets you free." Going inside the barracks without a gauze bandage was impossible. Corpses lay on the two-story bunk beds. From underneath the bunk beds skeletons that were barely alive would crawl out and swear that they were not Jews. No one could believe they were being liberated.

There were about 7,000 prisoners in the camp at the time. Among them was a prisoner known by the number 74233 (the name has not been established):

Suddenly I saw silhouettes in a white and gray uniform walking on a road near the camp. It was about 17:00. First we thought that they were camp inmates who were returning. I ran out to see who it was. We were so happy to learn that it was the Soviet reconnaissance units. There was no end to the kisses and greetings. We were told to go away. They explained that we couldn't stay there because it still wasn't clear where the enemy was. We took several steps back and then returned.

Lieutenant General Vasily Petrenko, who in 1945 commanded the 107th infantry division, arrived on the camp's territory soon after Shapiro. In his memoirs *Before and After Auschwitz* he describes what he saw:

On Jan. 18 the Germans took everyone who could walk with them. The sick and the weak were left behind. The few who could still walk ran away when our army reached the camp. We immediately sent the sanitary units belonging to the 108th, 322nd and my 107th divisions into the camp. The field hospitals opened their washrooms. This was the decree. The field kitchens of these divisions were responsible for feeding the inmates.

Commander Vasily Gromadsky was one of the first to enter the "death camp":

There was a lock on the gate. I didn't know if it was the main entrance or what. I ordered men to break the lock. There wasn't anyone there. We walked another 200 meters and saw prisoners in striped shirts running towards us, about 300 of them.

We became wary, since we had been warned that the Germans could be in disguise. But they were real prisoners. They were crying, embracing us. They told us that millions of people had been killed there. I can still remember them telling us how the Germans had sent 12 wagons of baby carriages from Auschwitz.

In 1945 Ivan Martynushkin was 21 years old. He was First Lieutenant Commander of the machine-gun unit of the 322nd infantry division. He remembers that up to the last moment he did not understand that he had been sent to liberate a con-

centration camp:

I came up to the fence with my unit, but it was already dark and we didn't enter the premises. We just occupied the guardroom outside the camp. I remember that it was very hot there, as if it had been heated.

We even thought that the Germans had prepared a heated place for themselves and then we came along. The following day we started sweeping up. There was an enormous settlement there — Bzhezinka, with impressive brick houses.

And as we went through it the Germans started shooting at us from some building. We hid and communicated with our commander, asking him to shell the building. I thought that if we destroyed it, we could move on. But suddenly the commander says that our artillery can't shell the building because there's a camp here, with people, and that we must avoid any crossfire. Only then did we understand what the fence was for.

Journalists from the 38th army Usher Margulis and Gennady Savin entered the camp after the soldiers. This is what they remember:

We entered the brick building and looked inside the rooms. The doors weren't closed. In the first room there was a huge pile of children's clothes: little coats, jackets, sweaters, many of them with bloodstains. In the next room there were boxes filled with dental crowns and golden dentures. In the third room there were boxes with woman's hair. And then a woman (a prisoner) brought us to a room filled with boxes with women's bags, lampshades, wallets, purses and other leather items. She said: "All this is made from human skin."

After Auschwitz was liberated, a new commandant was appointed to administer the town, Grigory Yelisavetinsky. On Feb. 4, 1945 he wrote to his wife:

There's a children's barrack in the camp. Jewish children of all ages (twins) were taken there. The Germans carried out experiments on them as if they were rabbits. I saw a 14-year-old boy whose veins had been injected with kerosene for some

'scientific' purpose.

Then a piece of his body was cut off and sent to a laboratory in Berlin, while it was replaced with another piece of the body. Now he lies in a hospital all covered with deep rotting ulcers and nothing can be done to help him. There's a beautiful girl walking around the camp. She's mad. I'm surprised that not all the people here have gone mad.

Meanwhile, former prisoners that were strong enough to walk left Auschwitz on their own. Number 74233 remembers:

On Feb. 5 we headed for Krakow. On one side of the road there were giant factories built by the prisoners that had died a long time ago from the exhausting work. On the other side was another big camp. We entered it and found some sick people who, like us, were alive only because they had not departed with the Germans on Jan.18.

Then we continued walking. For a long while we were followed by electric wires on stone pillars. We were very familiar with them. They were symbols of slavery and death. It seemed that we would never leave the camp. Then, finally, we came out and reached the village of Vloshenyusha.

We stayed overnight there and on the following day, Feb. 6, moved on. On the way a car stopped and gave us a ride to Krakow. We are free, but we still don't know how to be happy. We lived through so much and we lost so many people.

This article is based on documents from the Russian Holocaust Foundation and the following memoirs: "Before and After Auschwitz" by V. Petrenko, "I Survived Auschwitz" by K. Zhivul'skaya and "The Black Book" by V. Grossman and I. Ehrenburg

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines)

FC Start vs. the Nazis: When football really was a case of life or death



Participants of the Start - Flakelf match in Kiev, August 6, 1942

On September 19, 1941, the Soviet city of Kiev fell to the Nazis. After the occupation began, many of the football players from Kiev's popular Dynamo club tried to fight in the resistance for a time, but were soon cut off from the partisans and the front line. Rather than leave the city, they decided to stay together and most took jobs at the Kiev-based Bread Factory Number 1.

Then, in the summer of 1942, the players heard that the Germans wanted to stage a series of "friendly matches" – they even proposed that the *dinamovtsy* (former Dynamo players) practice at the city's Zenith stadium. The military superintendent of the city, Major General Eberhardt, was said to be the man behind the idea. He apparently saw in the proposed match a chance to further humiliate enslaved Kiev in front of thousands of observers. What is more, the occupiers might have a little fun at the expense of their weakened rivals.

The incredulous *dinamovtsy* debated amongst themselves. How were they to find enough energy to play on meager war rations? Would they not be sullyng themselves by playing the Nazi invaders? But Dynamo's key players argued for the matches, saying they would not just play, but would win. The people would come and see the

fascists beaten at football. It would be a breath of fresh air for the city's residents.

So the players accepted the challenge and named their team Start. On July 12, 1942, posters were hung all over Kiev: "football Match. German Armed Forces vs. Start Team, Kiev."

Start did not train much: They just kicked the ball around a bit near the bread factory, preserving their precious energy. Yet forward Ivan Kuzmenko worked hard on honing his free kick – 30 yards from the goal, testing goalkeeper Trusevich.

Kuzmenko suffered from some joint problems and knew he could not run much, but wanted to make a contribution.

A few days prior to the first match, Mikhail Sviridovsky, the most respected player on the team, dug up some uniforms for his comrades: white shorts, red t-shirts and long red socks. Everyone knew that the color of the jerseys and socks was in defiance of the Germans. But the confident Nazis turned out not to mind the red: beating the "reds" at football was such a tantalizing prospect.

The match did not exactly go to plan for the Nazis – Start paid no attention to German threats and beat them 4-1. On July 17, the Germans pulled together a somewhat stronger team. But the *Dinamovtsy* trounced them too: 6-0.

The next match saw the Hungarian club MSG Wal crushed 5-1 and then again 3-2 in a rematch. Kievans started to quietly cheer. The players began to be recognized on the streets once again, to be met with smiles and thanks, and more and more people showed up at the games.

In the fifth match, the Germans decided to teach the Russians a lesson. They assembled a strong team from the *Flakelf* – German air defense units, which included several professionals from different German football clubs (some of whom even continued their sports careers after the war). These were a different class of players from the previous Nazi teams. Well-fed and muscular, they played a mean brand of football – yet this did not prevent them from following their predecessors to an ignominious defeat, losing 5-1 to Start on August 6. During the match, the *dinamovtsy* could hear the fans shouting "Davai, Krasniye!" ("Come on you Reds!") The shouts were timid, but they were shouts nonetheless.

The management of the bakery where most of the players worked had promised to get them more bread to help them build up energy for the games, but now warned them that they were walking a tightrope. "They will shoot you!" warned the bakery staff, who supposedly claimed that the Nazi fans

were already calling for the Start players to be hung from the crossbar of the goal.

The 'Match of Death'

The match that was to decide the fate of the Kiev team was a so-called "revenge match" against Flakelf, scheduled for August 9. The players from Start knew that things could not continue as they had much longer. The Germans would not let them keep winning in front of thousands of fans. So it was no surprise when an officer in a Gestapo uniform reportedly paid a visit to their locker room before the match and issued an explicit order in clear Russian: "When the team goes out onto the field, it should salute the opposing team with the traditional 'Heil Hitler!'"

And there was one more thing, the Gestapo officer said. They were not to win the match.

The Dynamo players were silent. The Gestapo officer is said to have showed off his knowledge of Russian by saying "molchaniye – znak soglasiya." ("Silence is a sign of assent.") Indeed, the emaciated players did not utter a word before the game. But, after lining up in the center of the field, on a signal from captain Sviridovsky, they defiantly yelled: "Fizkult privet!" a common sports salute.

Determined to avenge their defeat in the first game, Flakelf took a hard physical approach to the rematch. "They were hitting us so hard that we could hear our bones creaking," forward Makar Goncharenko later recalled. "The officials on the field turned a blind eye to it and even smirked at such roughness."

Meanwhile, the officials – all German – were not doing their job. The Nazis were playing rough, deliberately targeting key players, but Start were not in a position to answer rough play with more of the same.

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Furthermore, the referee was doing all he could not to let Start get too close to the German goal, whistling for an offside on the slightest provocation. So it became senseless to make passes too close to the penalty box. Start had to resort to shooting at the goal from afar or outplaying the German defenders one-on-one.

Nonetheless, by half-time, Start were leading 3-1, having overturned an early strike for the Germans with a long-range free-kick from Kuzmenko and a brace by Goncharenko – one a header from a Kuzmenko cross and the other an individual goal created by dribbling through the German defense.

The second half was marked by fierce combativeness, with neither side giving quarter. Start were missing the talents of Kuzmenko, whose injured leg had forced him to come off the pitch at the break after being cynically fouled by the Germans throughout the first half. Flakelf scored twice to level the match, but Start were undeterred, and two fur-

ther goals for the Kiev side finally ended German resistance at 5-3.

On the morning of August 18, the whole Start team was arrested.

The price of victory

During 32 long days of interrogations, accusations, humiliations and threats in the basement of Gestapo headquarters, the Gestapo officers accused the players of being connected with the local underground and of beating the Germans on orders from the partisans. The interpreter in the interrogations turned out to be a traitor; before the war he had worked as a janitor at the stadium, now he slandered the players and sullied their reputations.

The prisoners were taken from the Gestapo dungeon one morning at dawn to several waiting cars. One of two bleak futures awaited those whose "crime" was having outplayed their opponents: a concentration camp or immediate execution.

Of the players sent to Syrets concentration camp (later



A Russian movie depicting these events was released in 2012

known as Babi Yar), four were later shot there, including Trusevich and Kuzmenko. Makar Goncharenko was among the survivors, along with Sviridovsky. In fact, Sviridovsky and Goncharenko executed a daring escape from the camp.

Goncharenko went on to become a respected Soviet coach, training such famous players and coaches as Valery Lobanovsky and Oleg Bazilevich.

Interestingly, Lobanovsky, who died in 2002 from a stroke,

resurrected the fame of Dynamo Kiev in the 1970s and into the 1990s. In 1975 he led his team to win the European Cup Winners' Cup, then the European Super Cup, where he defeated the German team Bayern Munich in two matches – a fitting epilogue to this astonishing story.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines),
originally published in
Rossiyskaya Gazeta

The legendary T-34 tank: 80 years old and still rocking

When Soviet T-34s rolled into Berlin in 1945, the battle tank's fighting days might have seemed nearly over. But the "nut", as crews called it because of its hexagonal turret shape, was only just beginning its odyssey through the world's conflicts. Over five more decades, the war machine would clatter across the Egyptian sands, the Cuban jungle, the savannah of Angola and far beyond.

Today it can still be found in arsenals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vietnam, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Yemen, North Korea, the Republic of Congo, Cuba, Laos, Mali and Namibia.

The tank evolved from the light Soviet BT (bystrokhodny tank/high-speed tank) from the 1930s, which had been partly derived from the American M1931 Christie tank.

In the years before, Soviet designer WWII, Koshkin worked intensively on the T-34, combining robust armor



T-34 tanks take position. The 3rd Byelorussian Front. 1944

and heavy firepower while preserving road performance and ease of maintenance and production.

The maiden batch of tanks was due to be reviewed by Joseph Stalin in Moscow on 17 March, 1940 after driving 1,250 miles to the capital. The tanks arrived on schedule and without major incident, having driven on a secret route through

snowbound forests, fields and rough terrain.

Impressed by what he saw, Stalin affectionately dubbed the tank "little swallow", and its start in life was assured. This triumph was marred, however, by the death of 42-year-old Koshkin, who had caught pneumonia during the arduous drive to Moscow and did not recover.

The tank's "adoptive father" was an engineer and a tank designer Alexander Morozov. He was the man who finally sent the T-34 into combat, and then adapted it to take on new and increasingly formidable German opponents on the battlefield.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of the T-34 was its sloped armor that made many hits from enemy shells to glance off and bounce away safely — an innovation which quickly became standard in tank design.

The T-34 was also an extremely maneuverable vehicle due to its relatively light weight, powerful engine and wide tracks.

Initially the tank was equipped with a 76-mm gun. In December 1943, the T-34-85 rumbled into action with a new turret and 85-mm gun, in-built radios which saw it through to Victory in 1945.

The T-34-85 was a brilliant tank, playing into the strengths of the basic model and having removed its most glaring weaknesses.

But the decisive factor that made the T-34 THE tank of WWII was the fact that T-34 was comparatively simple to manufacture and due to its brilliant design easy to repair in the field. A total of 65 000 T-34s were produced during the war years. With an overall 84 000 tanks, T-34 is the 2nd most mass produced tank in history.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines)
& Russia's Embassy Staff

Other Soviet WWII tanks

Although T-34s (medium tanks) made up the bulk of the Soviet Mechanised Forces, there were many other fine tanks that filled other niches and roles.

Heavy tanks

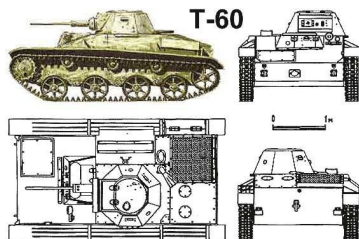
The KV tanks and its successor the IS tank family were Soviet heavy tanks during WWII. They had remarkable armour and firepower, were mainly used as breakthrough tanks to penetrate and destroy enemy defences.



IS-2, 1944 model

Light tanks

In the first years of the war light tanks proved to be largely inferior to its medium counterparts and mostly got replaced by T-34s. However T-70s & T-60-s were still used as scout and reconnaissance vehicles for the larger part of WWII. There were also the T-50s, designed to provide infantry support.



War Heroes: Alexander Pokryshkin

The air ace who terrorised the Luftwaffe

An important piece of the Red Army's victory mosaic against the Wehrmacht was the turnaround in a titanic clash of Soviet and Nazi air forces that dwarfed the Battle of Britain and which led to the Soviet Air Force defeating the almighty Luftwaffe

Part of the credit for the Soviet success in the skies goes to Alexander Pokryshkin who played a large role in changing the obsolete Soviet tactics that were in place when the Germans launched their blitzkrieg in 1941.

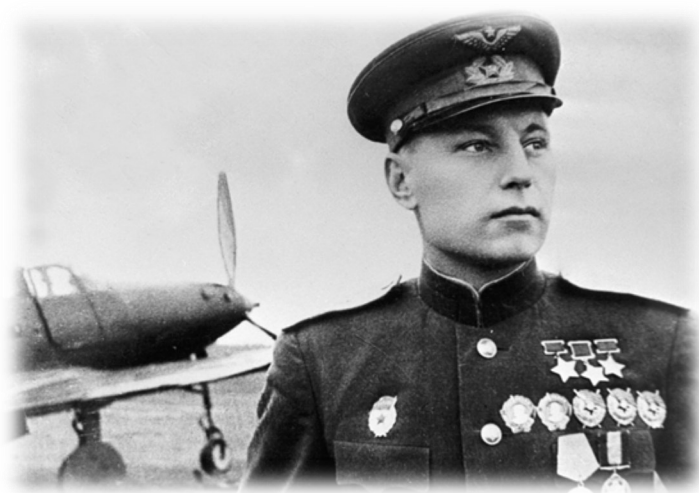
There is popular saying "there are bold pilots and there are old pilots, but there are no old bold pilots" proved to be particular true during World War II as fighter pilots' attrition rate was very high. But Pokryshkin bucked that trend. He was not only a great innovator but also a fearless pilot who led from the front and remained a fighter pilot till the last days of the war.

During the war the Russian fighter pilot made 650 sorties, participated in 139 air battles and was the second leading air ace in the Soviet and Allied forces, with an official record of 59 downed enemy planes. He retired as marshal of Soviet Air Force.

The air ace perfected his tactics during the heavy fighting over Kuban near Crimea in early 1943. The area saw some of the most intense air combat of World War II, with daily engagements of up to 200 aircraft in the air.

Pokryshkin's innovations played an important role in breaking the hold of outdated horizontal maneuvering and introducing vertical tactics that best took advantage of the qualities of the new Soviet aircraft.

Pokryshkin realised the advantage of altitude. He devised a new flying formation called the Kuban Stepladder – a three-tier formation that placed patrolling fighters in mutually



supporting low, middle and high altitudes.

Along with this, Russian commanders changed the attack priorities of their pilots. Instead of engaging German escort fighters first, they were directed to attack the slower bombers. This had a dramatic impact on the battle. Because the bombers were slower they were easier to attack and the Russian fighters went in for the kill. The sight of their prized bombers going down in flames over enemy territory tended to demoralise the German escort fighters. The Germans were then more likely to make rash moves, which would quickly end in a German rout.

In the death-defying battles over Kuban, Pokryshkin learned that sudden, swift attacks were the key to success and survival in the air.



Upon sighting German fighters, Pokryshkin was always the first to tear into them, creating a mess of their formations. His simple and direct tactical formula of "altitude-speed-maneuver-fire!" soon spread through the Air Force and became the Soviet fighter pilots' formula for aerial victory.

It is a measure of how much the Germans feared him that they would refuse to engage with the Russian fighters if they knew Pokryshkin was around. In fact, when his unit moved to the Ukraine territory he preferred to use the radio call signal Sotka (hundred), because he knew the Luftwaffe had ordered its pilots to stay on the ground if they knew he was in the air.

For Pokryshkin, the struggle for air superiority over the Luftwaffe was almost an obsession. And it paid dividends. Pilots of Pokryshkin's air division brought down as many as 1,147 enemy aircraft.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines)
& Russia's Embassy Staff

Underwater duels: How Soviet submarines held their own in WWII



Russia's modern submarine fleet is one of the strongest in the world. Some of its capabilities have been demonstrated during the Syrian operation. However, behind this success are decades and decades of work that began long ago during World War II.

After the beginning of the war it was believed the Soviet navy would be able to strike the enemy communications located in the Black and Baltic seas. But the Soviet submarines could not compete with those from Germany, while the position of the UK (which had the biggest fleet in the world) in the event of a war was unclear. Therefore the decision to develop the submarine fleet was very logical: Relatively low production costs helped to create a powerful force, capable of playing an important role in the war's naval battles.

Underwater duels

In terms of German subs sunk, the Soviet Navy outdid all its Western allies. Out of all the active nine Kriegsmarine (German Navy) subs sank, four were destroyed by Soviet subs.

The theaters of war were the cold waters of the Baltic and Barents Seas. In this underwater war, the Soviet Navy won a narrow points victory, destroying four subs and losing three.

The day after Germany invaded the USSR, a German U-144, using its superior armaments, sank a Soviet M-98 sub, only to meet the same fate a month and a half later. Off the coast of Estonia a Soviet Shuka-class sub fired two torpedoes and obliterated the German vessel.

Two years later another duel ended with a Soviet victo-

ry: Three Soviet torpedoes struck a German U-639 sub that was laying mines on the surface in the Barents Sea.

Soviet underwater weapon

Although the Soviet submarines were quick and effective in the battles of WWII, the Malyutka series subs could not really be described as a serious weapon. Although they were compact, and could therefore be transported on railways, they were not comfortable for the crew, even though the crew could adapt to this. But most importantly, they were not safe. The sub had only one firing installation, it was not sturdy enough to submerge to a depth that was required for battle and a heavy storm could break it in half.

However, it was the Malyutka that became the most effective Soviet sub in WWII. They were responsible for de-

stroying more than 60 enemy transport ships and 8 combat vessels. The crew's training compensated for the technical insufficiencies and allowed them to achieve impressive results.

Role of Soviet submarines in common Victory

The contribution of the Soviet underwater fleet to the victory was really enormous. In spite of the fact that enemy's subs were sometimes better equipped it managed to destroy more vessels which resulted in the retreat of Germans and surrender of the Nazi regime.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines)
& Russia's Embassy Staff



Panzer Hunting: How the USSR's ZiS-3 Anti-Tank Gun Took on the Nazi Wehrmacht



Seventy five years ago, in February 1942, the Red Army concluded trials of the ZiS-3 76mm divisional field gun, a weapon that would become the most mass-produced artillery system in human history. The ZiS-3 quickly became the dread of enemy armored vehicles and infantry alike.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941, the task of stopping the main striking power of the Wehrmacht, the Panzerwaffe, fell on the shoulders of artillery units. In 1941, the most widely-deployed anti-tank gun in the Soviet arsenal was the M1937, a

45-mm semi-automatic gun. That gun could easily take out 50-mm armor at a range of 500 meters, and its light weight and small profile made it both maneuverable and difficult to target for enemy tanks.

Military engineer Vasily Grabin had started work on ZiS-3 before the war began. By that time, the 42-year-old designer had completed the artillery faculty at the Dzerzhinsky Military-Technical Academy, and spent many years at work at artillery factories, where he was tasked with creating new artillery designs.

In the 1930s, Grabin developed an ergonomic method for shortening the design planning phase for the creation of heavy guns. Grabin's method allowed for the development of new systems in months, and sometimes even weeks. His techniques allowed designers and engineers to save significantly on labor, energy, and metal required, all without compromising on quality.

During the design stage for the ZiS-3, Grabin immediately set his sights on its potential for mass production. This required reducing the number of steps necessary to build the gun; high quality casting of large components, mass production and component standardization allowed for the number of components to be reduced from 2,080 to just 1,306, which allowed the guns to be produced faster and more cheaply, without a loss in quality.

The gun's recoil was offset by a full 30% by a muzzle break device. Compared to its predecessor, the ZiS-3 was a full 420 kg lighter, had better clearance, and was designed to allow the 7 person crew to focus on their

individual tasks, shortening firing time.

Upon the delivery to the army, the ZiS-3 received a number of nicknames. "Some affectionately gave it the female name Zoya". The Wehrmacht gave the gun its own name — 'Ratsch-bumm', accounting for the fact that the impact (ratsch) was heard before the roar of the artillery fire (bumm).

In 1943, the ZiS-3's gun was attached to the T-70 light tank chassis, creating the Su-76 self-propelled gun. The Su-76's debut occurred at the Battle of Kursk, Nazi Germany's last attempt to carry out an offensive on Soviet territory.

Source: RBTH
(Russia Beyond the Headlines)
& Russia's Embassy Staff



What to watch?

Best Soviet-Russian World War II movies

World War II and The Great Patriotic War as part of it were unquestionably the most intense war conflicts in the history of humanity where unthinkable atrocities and suffering happened side by side with valorous acts of self-sacrifice and heroic deeds. The fact that this historic turning point sprouted a whole genre of motion pictures is only logical. And no wonder that the USSR and the Soviet people, having survived and emerged victorious in this “maelstrom”, produced a vast number of movies depicting the events of the Great Patriotic War, most of which have an unmistakable touch of authenticity and sincerity. Unfortunately these masterpieces aren't very well known by the English-speaking audiences. To help you get acquainted we compiled a list of the best Soviet and Russian WWII movies that are considered to be a “must-see” for anyone who is into these themes.

The Cranes are Flying (Mosfilm, 1957). Directed by M.Kalatozov

Mikhail Kalatozov's «The Cranes are Flying» is widely considered to be a creative breakthrough and one of the best Soviet films. It is a story of love ruined by war, exploring the hardships of life on the home front.



Leading actors Batalov's and Samoilova's performances are especially noteworthy as well as the brilliant cinematography by Urusevsky.

The film won the prestigious Cannes Palme d'Or award.

Destiny of a Man (1959). Directed by S.Bondarchuk



A directoral debut of the world-famous, Oscar-winning director Sergey Bondarchuk, «Destiny of a Man» is a profound adaptation of Mikhail Sholokhov's novel. It tells a heart-rending

story of a man who loses everyone and everything during the war, goes through the PoW concentration camp hell and how having being worn-out on the inside he still manages to find a new reason to live.

Sergey Bondarchuk himself plays the main character and what a powerful performance he gives. The last minutes of the film are among the most touching ones in the history of cinema.

The Dawns Here are Quiet (1972). Directed by S.Rostotsky



The engaging story of the film is based on the novella by Boris Vasilyev. A sergeant at a remote anti-aircraft post has problems with the soldiers sent under his command as they tend to slacken and get negligible. It all changes when a replacement is sent consisting of five young women. The movie's first half establishes their routine and introduces each of the women's background using flashbacks to their pre-war past. Everything changes when German paratroopers land in the area. The ending is refreshingly free of the so popular nowadays over-the-top cringeworthy sentimentality and stays true to its realistic roots.

The film was nominated for Oscar but lost. D deservedly or not, that's for oneself to decide but it's definitely worth watching.

They Fought for the Motherland / They Fought for Their Country (1975). Directed by S.Bondarchuk



The movie depicts the story of a Soviet platoon fighting a rear-guard action during the German drive on Stalingrad. A star cast of actors who were real war veterans and a sincere down-to-earth story is what makes it a special, unique treat for a war movie gourmet.

Come and See (1985). Directed by E.Klimov

A powerful and harrowing masterpiece, one of the most difficult movies to watch. It tells a story of a teenage boy in Belarus who loses his family, joins the partisans, witnesses a whole village burned alive and other horrific atrocities committed by the Nazis. We see a joyful youngster turn into a nearly broken grey haired little old man within a week. A frightening transformation to behold.



Only Old Men Are Going to Battle (1973) Directed by L.Bykov



Not everyone will make it to the end.

A unique blend of war drama and a musical comedy element. It tells the story of a fighter squadron who faces hardened Luftwaffe aces and only 'old men' i.e. experienced pilots are allowed to fight. Soon new recruits join the battle and become 'old men' themselves.

Fortress of War / The Brest Fortress (2010) Directed by A.Kott

A contemporary Russian-Belarusian joint motion picture production that manages to stay truthful to the roots of the war movie genre and reproduce the authenticity and deep humanity of the Soviet movies.

It tells the tragic story of the stern defenders of the famous Brest Fortress, who fought the enemy despite all odds ultimately sacrificing their lives for their homeland.



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