

TANKMAN ZINOVY KOLOBANOV AND HIS LEGENDARY FEAT

Танкист Зиновий Колобанов и его легендарный подвиг

August 1941 was truly the period of tank ambushes in the history of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. On August 20, 1941, in the area of the strategic transport hub of Voyskovitsy-Krasnogvardeysk a tank battle which is regarded to be "the most successful tank battle" in the entire history of tank confrontations took place. The battle was led and won by the Soviet tankman Zinovy Kolobanov. Lots of people still refuse to believe in its reality. However, it is known for certain that this battle was included in the Guinness Book of Records and no one managed to repeat its result.

Since July 3, 1941, Z. G. Kolobanov was a participant of the Great Patriotic War. He was directed to the Northern Front as the commander of a company of KV-1 heavy tanks of the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division. It was August 19, 1941 when he was sent for to the division commander, Baranov. The division commander showed three roads on the map leading to Krasnogvardeysk from Luga, Volosovo and Kingisepp (via Tallinskoe highway), and ordered: "Block them and fight to the death!" In the same day, the company commander sent 5 tanks to meet the approaching enemy: two tanks commanded by Lieutenant Sergeev and Junior Lieutenant Evdokimenko – on Luga road, two tanks commanded by Lieutenant Lastochkin and Junior Lieutenant Degtyar – on Kingiseppskaya road, and the tank of the company commander himself was supposed to stand at the state farm Voyskovitsy.

The crew of Kolobanov's tank consisted of a gun commander senior sergeant Andrei Usov, a senior driver-mechanic foreman Nikolai Nikiforov, a junior driver-mechanic Nikolai Rodnikov and a radio operator senior sergeant Pavel Kiselkov.

Kolobanov determined for his tank the position so that the longest, well-open section of the road would occur in the fire sector. The tank trench was set up just 300 meters opposite the T-junction to fire head on.

On August 20, 1941 at about 2 PM, German scouts-motorcyclists followed the riverside road to the Voyskovitsy state farm. Kolobanov's crew let them pass waiting for the main enemy forces to approach. Then a column of 22 German tanks appeared. After waiting until the head tank of the convoy reached two birches on the road ("Landmark No. 1"), Kolobanov commanded: "Landmark first, on the head, a direct

shot under the cross, armor-piercing – fire!" After the first shots three German lead tanks caught fire, blocking the road. Having knocked them out, the tank crew directed fire to the tail, and then to the center of the column.

The enemy was trapped. During the battle, which lasted about an hour, 22 German tanks were destroyed. After the battle more than 100 hits of enemy bullets were counted on the armor of Kolobanov's tank.

In total, on August 20, 1941 Kolobanov's tank company destroyed 43 enemy tanks. In September 1941 all members of Kolobanov's crew were awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union Order. On September 21 Zinovy Kolobanov was seriously wounded and sent for treatment, which took a long time. After the war he stayed in military forces until 1958, when he was transferred to the reserve.

From 1967 to 1994 the legendary tankman lived in Minsk, on Tashkentskaya street No. 26/2, apt. 80. From 1960 to 1983 he worked at the Minsk Automobile Plant as a quality control department controller and received the title of "The Record-setter in the Communist Labor". Zinovy Grigorievich died on August 8, 1994 in Minsk.

In 2006 a memorial monument to the tanker with a story of the legendary battle was erected at the Chizhovskoye cemetery where Zinovy Kolobanov is buried. In 2014 a memorial tablet's in honor of Zinovy Kolobanov opening ceremony took place on Tashkentskaya street No. 26/2. The park on Krasnoslobodskaya Street (Chizhovka microdistrict, Zavodskoy district of Minsk) was named after the legendary tanker in 2017. Since 2017 a sports and patriotic track and field race dedicated to the feat of Kolobanov's tank company has been held annually in the park named after the 900th anniversary of the city of Minsk. There is also a Kolobanov medal in the popular online game World of tanks.

The exposition of the Minsk secondary school № 131 "Museum of Military Glory" contains materials about the life and feat of the legendary tankman: a stand, copies of photos and documents, a bust and a tankman's jacket with military awards. Information about Kolobanov's feat is included in the overview and thematic tour. Students of the school honor the memory of the hero-tankman, bear patronage over his grave, annually come to lay flowers and remember his feat.