

Immortal feat for the sake of life

Among feats of arms of warriors who protected Moscow in 1941, a great feat of 28 Panfilov's guardsmen occupies a special place. On November 16, 1941, near Dubossekovo village in the vicinity of Volokolamsk, a little group of brave soviet soldier stood in the way of more than 50 enemy tanks which had been rushing for Moscow. Defenders did not waver and delayed enemy's breakthrough for 4.5 hours till arrival of our reserve troops. The entire country learned about this feat soon and 28 Panfilov division's guardsmen became a part of the Great Patriotic War history.

Indeed, first publications and communiqués reported that all 28 guardsmen died like heroes. However, six soldiers wounded and contused – Daniel Kazhubergeno, Grigori Shemaykin, Illarian Vassiliev, Dmitry Timofeyev, Ivan Shadrin and Ivan Dobrobabin turned out to be stronger than death. Mortally wounded Private Ivan Natarov stayed alive for some time after the battle. Having regained consciousness in a trench after the combat, he crawled to the forest and wandered around for several days, exhausted by blood loss. Finally, he stumbled on our intelligence unit and was delivered to hospital. War correspondent of “Krasnaya Zvezda” Alexander Krivitsky found him there. Natarov told him about all the peripeteia of the battle. Having relied on the words of dying soldier, who according to Krivitsky had been lying on deathbed, the correspondent wrote his famous article “About 28 fallen heroes”, which was published in the newspaper “Krasnaya Zvezda” on January 22nd, 1942 and in a collection of article “Soviet guardsmen”.

Seriously injured G. Shemyakin and I. Vassiliyev had been found on a battlefield by intelligence unit. They received prolonged treatment and finally returned to acting army. I. Shadrin and D. Timofeyev, who were lying unconscious in a trench, were captured by German rear team. Shemyakin, Vassiliev and Shadrin were presented with the Gold Star medals. Timofeyev did not get the award because of terrible state of health, although he had been invited to Moscow for award reception, he died in 1947.

Even during the war and first post-war decades, some publicists tried to question authenticity of 28 heroes' feat. Recently, this feat once again became an object of defamation and libel by crude dilettantes and “omniscient falsifies”. Among them we should name S. Mironenko, director of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (SARF), Doctor of Historical Sciences, specialist in Russian history of the 19th century, Mironenko uses Case № 4041, which had been kept for many years in SARF special fund, as a main source of his slanderous insinuations.

The history of this case started in spring of 1948, when chief military judge, Lieutenant General N. Afanassiev found out, that six soldiers out of twenty-eight had survived in the battle, and four of them even had been held captives at different times. Soon a special commission of military procurers which had been urgently set up by Afanassiev, arrived to 8th Guards Panfilov Division and started interrogation. Colonel I. Karpov and A. Mukhamedyarov, former commissioner of that regiment and senior political instructor were among those who were questioned. Both of them gave testimony that there had not been Dubossekovo battle of 28 Panfilov's guardsmen with German tanks on November 16, 1941 and the whole story was total speculation. It is strange that they shared their "authoritative opinion" on the situation, while it is known, that in the very beginning of the battle both of them together with regiment's right flank retreated to a "new line of defense". Falsifiers' theory also rely on the assertion that Private of Guards I. Natarov, who presumably told to it, because he had been killed in the battle filed on November 14. It should be noted that the author of the article met with five survivors of the Dubossekovo battle, i.e. D.Kozhubergenov, G. Shemyakin, I/ Shadrim, I. Dobrobabin and I. Vassiliyev. All five of them confirmed that I. Natarov had taken active part in that battle.

Mendacious actions of S. Mironenko aroused fair indignation among veterans. Marshal of the Soviet Union D. Yazov noted in his article "Ashes of heroes are sacred", "that Mironenko, who does not even know the smell of gun powder, dared call that unprecedented feat a myth".

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