

THE RUSSIAN VIEW

YURI PASHOLOK

**SNEAK
PEEK**




WORLD OF TANKS

THE

SU-152

AND RELATED VEHICLES

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Publisher’s Preface

In 2010 the massive, multiplayer online game *World of Tanks (WoT)* was launched by the company Wargaming. At the time this book was published, *WoT* had more than 80 million registered players worldwide.

The creative people at Wargaming.net are not just tank enthusiasts—they are passionate about the history of armored fighting vehicles (AFVs) and getting them right in the game. In 2012, the company started publishing a series of books in Russian that utilized documents and archival materials that had never before been seen by outsiders or published in any language about the design, procurement, development, manufacturing, and combat employment of Soviet AFVs during World War Two (the Great Patriotic War to Russians).

Now these remarkable books are being published in English with the obvious aphorism The Russian View—English readers may be surprised by some of the opinions of the Russian authors in this series. The series included three categories of titles: Construction and Development (as for the SU-152); Combat Service; and Military Operations.

Yuri Igorevich Pasholok, the author of this book about the SU-152 and other self-propelled (SP) guns based on the KV tank chassis, uncovered intriguing facts and the secret story of Soviet heavy artillery SP guns through his research, including:

- *The plan for SP guns began in 1931*
- *Competition to develop a “bunker buster” SP gun started in earnest in 1938 but just missed battlefield deployment in the 1940 Russo-Finnish Winter War*
- *Soviet pre-war intelligence indicating that Germany was working on super heavy tanks increased the urgency of the SP program—although the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 showed that intelligence to be wrong*
- *The impact of evacuating factories and other industry beyond the Ural mountains as German forces advanced*
- *Joseph Stalin’s personal interest in the SP program and competition between factory design teams for resources and support*
- *How the destruction of the Barricades factory in Stalingrad (modern day Volgograd) severely reduced Soviet manufacturing of 152-mm and larger guns*
- *Why SU-152 manufacture stopped after only 670 were produced and why no new heavy SP artillery was deployed to help Soviet armies batter their way through German fortifications in 1944-45*

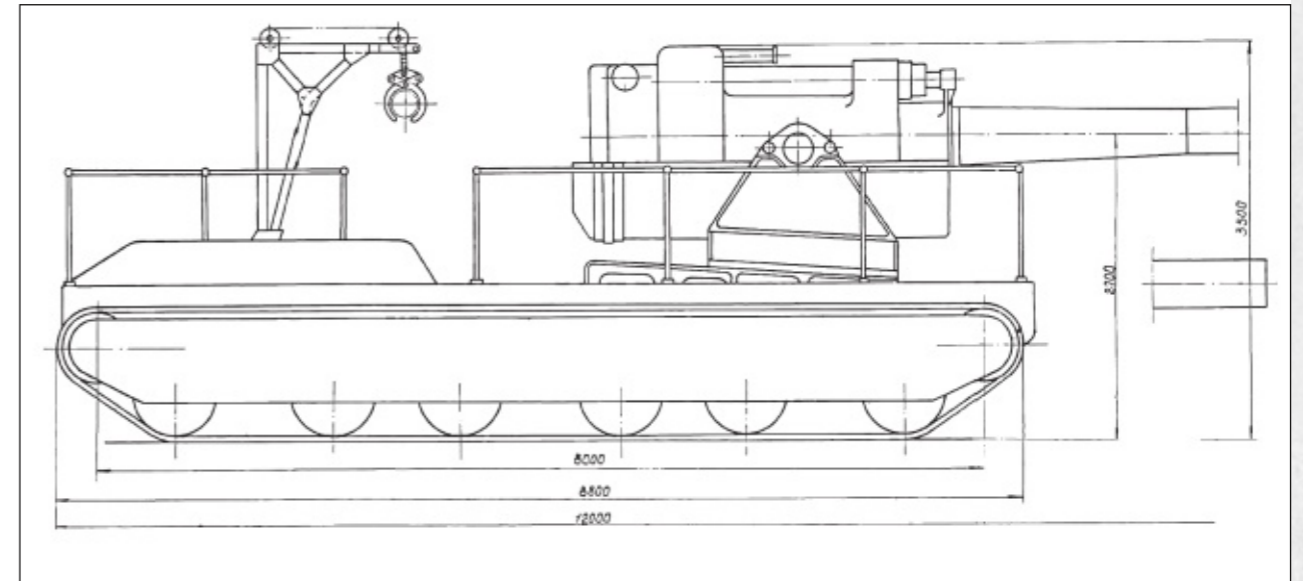
Pasholok’s research provides readers of World War Two history in the West with a much better understanding and greater appreciation of Soviet SP weapon development, and I am extremely fortunate to be able to offer these terrific books for the first time in English.

Dana Lombardy
Lombardy Studios
September 2015

CHAPTER 1. Lessons of the Winter War

The story of the development of heavy SP guns in the Soviet Union began in September 1931. The primary goal was to increase the mobility of heavy artillery through mechanization. The SU-7 and SU-14 SP guns were developed during work on a “self-propelled corps-level triplex.” The SU-7 was designed to carry the 152-mm gun, the 203-mm howitzer, and the 305-mm mortar. The SU-14 was designed for the 107-mm gun, the 152-mm gun, and the 203-mm howitzer. Two prototypes were built and assigned the designations SU-14 and SU-14-1. Both systems were initially armed with the B-4 203-mm super-heavy howitzer model 1931, which was later replaced by the BR-2 152-mm heavy gun model 1935. There was talk of starting

B-4 203-mm heavy howitzers on parade in Moscow (RGAKFD).



Sketch of the SU-7 from a Plant No. 185 report on its experimental work.

mass production of the SU-14. The “small triplex” project was canceled on August 7, 1938, after the political arrest of N. N. Magdesiyev (developer of the B-4 howitzer), followed by the arrest of P. I. Syachintov, who headed up the work on the SU-14.

The subject of super-heavy SP artillery came to the fore again in late 1939. On November 30, units of the Red Army crossed the border into Finland, and the conflict that the Finns refer to as the Winter War got underway. The Red Army units quickly encountered the layered defensive line known as the Mannerheim Line. The assault on the line failed. The attacking units, which included tank units, suffered heavy losses, and the offensive bogged down. The Finns managed to hold out until late February 1940. The Mannerheim Line featured a high concentration of defensive structures, some of which could only be put out of action by direct hits from corps-level artillery weapons or super-heavy artillery. The Finns used a large number of antitank artillery guns, which made it difficult to defeat the bunkers. This situation gave rise to an acute need for self-propelled large-caliber guns with armor sufficient to at least protect against small arms and shrapnel.

At that time, Leningrad was the center of heavy tank and heavy SP gun development. In April 1938, a competition got underway between two design bureaus—the Kirov Factory and Leningrad Experimental Machine Building Plant No. 185 (S. M. Kirov). Plant No. 185 had acquired a great deal of experience developing tanks and SP guns (including the SU-7 and SU-14 discussed previously), but it only manufactured a few dozen vehicles between 1933 and 1940. The Kirov Factory could not boast of a large number of development projects, but it had one very well known product—the T-28 medium tank. In 1933, the factory’s special design bureau, SKB-2, converted

CHAPTER 4. A Personal Order from Stalin

On November 28, 1941, a report from P. F. Solomonov on his trip to Chelyabinsk reached the desk of Military Engineer 2nd Class Anisimov, chief of the Field Artillery Armament Directorate's 2nd Department. The purpose of his trip was to look into the availability of the KV-1 tank's armament. The report addressed development in addition to gun supplies. In November 1941, A. N. Bulyshev was managing development of the U-11 and U-12 systems, which involved mounting the M-30 122-mm howitzer and the 52-K 85-mm antiaircraft gun in the KV-1's turret. The report's third paragraph is of much greater interest to us.

By order of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, the Kirov Factory is developing a triple mount for the KV: One F-34 gun and two 45-mm guns (barrels without

KV-7 assault tank,
December 1941
(TsAMO).



Side view of a KV-7
(TsAMO).

recoil mechanisms), with the recoil mechanisms for the triplex taken from the ZIS-5. No 360° field of fire; angle of traverse $\pm 15^\circ$ or $\pm 7.5^\circ$, as allowed by the installation; basic load 300 rounds (100 for each weapon); in addition, the triplex to have 3–4 machine guns.

In December, the factory must equip 1/5 of all KV tanks with these triplex systems.

The factory urgently needs the drawings and engineering analysis of the 45-mm tank guns, drawings and engineering analysis of the F-34 (they can make do with on-hand blueprints of the F-34, but the engineering analysis is necessary), and drawings for the ZIS-5 cradle (ruggedized).

The factory also urgently needs four 45-mm tank gun barrels together with their breech mechanisms and, in preparation for testing the triplex, a location, ammunition, and a test program. It is crucially necessary to solve the problem of sights for the triplex.¹

A note dated November 29, 1941, attached to the report reiterated the identity of the person who initiated development of the vehicle:

By personal order of People's Commissar of Defense Comrade Stalin, the Kirov Factory (ChTZ in Chelyabinsk) is developing a triple mount for the KV tank (two 45-mm tank guns and one F-34 76-mm gun).

¹ TsAMO RF, collection 81, series 12104, file No. 79, p. 181.



WORLD OF TANKS

For the first time in English — photos and drawings from secret Soviet archives and museums — many never previously published! Recently translated documents are used to present the true story of the SU-152 and other self-propelled (SP) guns based on the KV tank chassis, including:

The plan for Soviet heavy artillery SP guns began in 1931

Competition to develop a “bunker buster” SP gun started in earnest in 1938 but just missed a battlefield test in the 1939-1940 Russo-Finnish Winter War

Soviet pre-war intelligence indicating that Germany was working on super heavy tanks increased the urgency of the SP program—although the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 showed that intelligence to be wrong

The impact of evacuating factories and other industry beyond the Ural mountains as German forces advanced

Joseph Stalin's personal interest in the SP program and competition between factory design teams for resources and support

How the destruction of the Barricades factory in Stalingrad (modern day Volgograd) severely reduced Soviet manufacturing of 152-mm and larger guns

After it was deployed on the battlefield, the SU-152 became nicknamed “Beast Killer” because its big gun was the only anti-tank weapon able to damage or destroy the menagerie of German heavy armor—Tigers, Panthers, and Elephants

Why SU-152 manufacture stopped after only 670 were produced and why no new heavy SP artillery was deployed to help Soviet armies batter their way through German fortifications in 1944-45

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