

## Yakubovski, Izrail Semyonovich

### Lieutenant

Izrail Semyonovich Yakubovski was born in 1924 in Samarkand, Uzbek SSR. He was a good student and involved in sports. He dreamed of becoming an engineer, but the war interfered with his plans. At the age of 18 he was called up by the Red Army. After graduating from a military academy, he was assigned to the front as commander of an anti-tank rifle platoon.

In 1943 prolonged fighting took place to liberate the Taman Peninsula. Lieutenant Yakubovski set a personal example in inspiring his men to rout the German occupation forces. They destroyed several tanks and dozens of Nazi troops.

### The Kerch Operation

On November 2, 1943, an assault group of the 6th Guards Infantry Regiment, 2nd Guards Infantry Division, comprising two submachine gun platoons supported by an anti-tank rifle platoon landed on the Kerch Peninsula. This was the start of a huge operation mounted by Soviet troops to liberate the Crimea.

Fierce fighting broke out on the coast of the peninsula. Neither the pounding of German artillery and mortars nor continuous shelling succeeded in halting the assault group commanded by 19-year old Lieutenant Izrail Yakubovski.

The machine gunners, supported by Yakubovski's platoon, smashed the enemy weapon emplacements one after the other. The commander himself destroyed three guns. The soldiers consolidated their position on the captured bridgehead and after them came an infantry battalion which landed without casualties.

On the next day German artillery and mortars opened fire from Hill 175.0 and halted the movement of the assault group. The latter dug in.

Regrouping their forces, the Germans launched a counterattack. Relying on their numerical superiority, they expected an easy victory.

Three attacks were repulsed, but this did not stop the enemy. The Soviets, exhausted by the crossing and weary from round-the-clock fighting, were unable to repulse the fourth attack and started to retreat. At this critical moment Lieutenant Yakubovski, pistol in hand, shouted "Forward for the Motherland," and rushed towards the advancing Germans.

The example of their heroic commander aroused the soldiers. First, one moved, then another. Soon the entire group was following Yakubovski.

The Germans, stunned by the audacity of the young commander moving towards them, stopped for a moment and then rapidly took to their heels, leaving behind their dead and wounded.

The assault group had driven off the enemy and improved its position.

In the fighting Lieutenant Yakubovski knocked out four gun emplacements and killed more than 15 enemy soldiers.

#### Liberation of the Crimea

The decisive battle for the liberation of the Crimea occurred in April-May 1944. The 6th Guards Infantry Division was fighting at Sevastopol. In the heat of the battle on May 7, with only a few soldiers and three anti-tank rifles of the 1st Battalion of the 6th Guards Infantry Regiment facing them, the Germans flung five tanks into battle.

"Don't be afraid, boys, get your grenades ready," cried Lieutenant Yakubovski as he reached for his own.

When the German tanks were very close, Yakubovski hurled his grenade, and the leading tank turned sharply and stopped. Flames burst from the vehicle. The other tanks continued to move toward the Soviet positions. The anti-tank riflemen were firing without let-up. Another tank burst into flames. The enemy then pounded the Soviet troops with artillery and mortars. Neither the death of their comrades nor the groans of the wounded shook the riflemen's determination. They fought bitterly to defend their position.

As the third tank blew up, someone cried:

"The commander is wounded!"

Lieutenant Yakubovski was covered with blood. Only five men remained alive. Yakubovski knew that if he put down his anti-tank rifle, the Fascist tanks

would be able to break through. He pressed the trigger. There was an explosion. The tank advancing towards him stopped in its tracks.

"Hurrah!" came the cry of guardsmen of the adjacent company as they hurled themselves into the attack.

At the end of the day Soviet units had broken into Sevastopol and stormed Sapun Hill. They captured its southwestern slopes, thus depriving the enemy of advantageous positions. Continuing their advance, the Soviets smashed the enemy on and near Sapun Hill. On May 9, the Germans retreated from the southwestern part of Sevastopol and found themselves pushed close to the sea. By that evening the southeastern part of the city had been liberated. On May 10, soldiers of the 2nd Guards Infantry Division had cleared the enemy from Streletsk Bay, and within two days ended enemy resistance at Kamyshev Bay and Cape Kherstones.

On May 12, 1944, the Crimean Peninsula was completely freed of the German occupation forces.

On May 16, 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union to three soldiers of the 2nd Guards Infantry Division — Lieutenant V.I. Davydov, Lieutenant I.S. Yakubovski and Private 1st Class V.I. Drobyazko — for exceptional bravery and steadfastness displayed in the battle against the Nazis.

In that same year, 1944, Izrail Semyonovich Yakubovski died a hero's death.

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**Source: Shapiro, Gerhson (Ed.), *Under Fire, the Stories of Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union*, Gershon Shapiro, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1988 pp. 630-633**