



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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## Dedicated to the Memory of MIIT University Students – Fighters of 19 Separate ASWC Battalion...



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### ABSTRACT

*«Let's remember everyone by name,  
let's remember our grief...  
This is necessary – not for the dead!  
This is necessary – for alive!»  
(Robert Rozhdestvensky «Requiem»)*

When preparing the information about the Great Patriotic War, vivid stories about the heroes and their heroic deeds are often expected from the keepers of history – museum employees. Heroic deeds must certainly be impressive, stories are bright and

exciting, supported by impressive numbers, high awards. It's like that... But let the story that will be discussed in the article remind you that the Victory in the most terrible and bloody war of the 20th century became possible due to the daily heroic deeds of all citizens of our country, all without exception, regardless of their age, gender, profession. Precisely because the female students of MIIT, who volunteered for the front in 1942, did not consider themselves heroes, today the staff of RUT (MIIT) Museum is restoring their history bit by bit in the archives and new facts of their military path are published for the first time in 80 years!

**Keywords:** Great Patriotic War, history, MIIT University, Russian University of Transport, history of science and engineering.

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**The text of the article originally written in Russian is published in the first part of the issue.**  
**Текст статьи на русском языке публикуется в первой части данного выпуска.**

The strategic defensive operation in Stalingrad region lasted more than 200 days and nights and included two stages:

- first – conduct of defensive combat operations by the troops of the fronts on the distant approaches to Stalingrad (July 17, 1942 – September 12, 1942);

- second – conduct of defensive operations to hold Stalingrad (September 13, 1942 – November 18, 1942).

An active part in the defence of the city on the Volga was taken by the Stalingrad Air Defence Corps District (SADCD). By order of the People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union K. E. Voroshilov dated April 20, 1942, the Stalingrad air defence divisional area was transformed into the Stalingrad Air Defence Corps District (SADCD). During fierce battles in the interfluvium of the Volga and Don, the troops of the corps were actively fighting. On the eve of the Battle of Stalingrad, SADCD included 76 units and subunits with a personnel strength of 33468 people.

In accordance with the decree of the State Defence Committee of the USSR of March 25, 1942, 100000 Komsomol girls were sent to air defence units to fill the positions of telephone operators, radio operators, reconnaissance air observers and anti-aircraft artillery, as well as other «male» military positions [1].

So, in May 1942, 3,116 girls aged 19 to 25 arrived in the air defence corps. It was required in the shortest possible time to train them for combat duty in parts of the corps air defence and in separate battalions of air surveillance, warning, and communications. Komsomol girls were called up from various cities of the Soviet Union. Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers n.a. I. V. Stalin (MIIT) in 1941 was evacuated to Novosibirsk. It was from there that 27<sup>1</sup> Komsomol girls, students of 1–4 years at MIIT, volunteered for the Red Army and were sent to the Stalingrad front. By order of June 8, 1942, they were all enrolled in 19 separate battalion of air surveillance, warning, and communications (SB ASWC).

From a report to the head of the political department of the 4<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Division.

<sup>1</sup> The names and surnames of 23 students of MIIT are confirmed by documents from the archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and the archive of RUT (MIIT), research and search work continues for three more persons by the staff of RUT (MIIT) Museum.

Report of the 19 separate battalion (SB) ASWC of June 18–23, 1942:

«...7. Acceptance of new replenishment. Komsomol girls are in the village of *Sharovo, Lozano-Alekseevsky district*. From June 11 to June 14, a march of 102 km was completed. It went in an organised manner. There were no laggards. From the 15<sup>th</sup> lesson strictly according to the program, everyone has got a great desire to learn the specialties of ASWC...».

Classes were held in subdivisions of 19 SB ASWC, daily for ten hours during the day and two hours at night, for combat and political training.

The ASWC fighters should have known perfectly:

1. Tasks of ASWC service.
2. Appointment, composition, property of the observation post and elements of the order of battle.
3. ASWC equipment.
4. Material part of the rifle.
5. Means of communication of ASWC observation posts and the procedure for using reports of the «AIR» type.

Also, should be able perfectly:

6. To detect, to identify, to determine the course, height, type, and number of enemy aircraft.
7. To distinguish the silhouettes of the aircraft of the USSR, England, and the USA, which are in service with the Red Army (author: Pic. 1).
8. To describe all the characteristic features of the device of any aircraft, to determine the type of aircraft for any part (tail, fuselage shape, plane, engine group).
9. To draw from memory the shape of the silhouette of the aircraft of Germany, Italy and Romania (author: Pic. 2).

10. To perform exercise No. 1 from a rifle, to protect the rifle.

11. To draw a current carrying circuit.

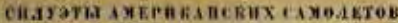
12. To turn on correctly telephone sets UNA-I and UNA-F, MB «Krasnaya Zarya» in a single-wire and two-wire circuit.

13. To comply with the requirements of the disciplinary, drill, as well as the internal service charters.

Recruit girls successfully completed the training, during the test, the vast majority received «good» and «excellent» scores.

From the report to political instructor of 19 SB ASWC: «During the training of recruits,





**Pic. 1. Silhouettes of American planes [2]**



**Pic. 2. Silhouettes of German planes [3].**



***Pic. 3. Commander of 19 SB ASWC Lieutenant Colonel P. F. Foris  
(from a personal file of 1944).***

*20 combat leaflets were issued and the best editor, the Komsomol member Larisa Knoroz (a student of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of group 11 of the Faculty of Railway Engineers), was especially noted, who managed to direct the platoon personnel to eliminate shortcomings in learning»...*

From the report on combat activities of 19 SB ASWC for the years of the Patriotic War of 1941–1945: *«In June 1942, the battalion received girls for replenishment. By this time there were no women's uniforms, it was very difficult to get a ride by rail, because ammunition was transported first. Therefore, for 1,5 months the girls were in the unit in their dresses. We made the transition from Kupyansk*

*to the station Balashev in own shoes. Only later, in Stalingrad, the girls-fighters were uniformed»...*

19 SBASWC was formed in Western Ukraine in the city of Lvov on March 1–5, 1940 in accordance with the Directive of the Air Defence Directorate of Kiev Special Military District (KSMD) No. 2/00208 dated March 3, 1940. The battalion was subordinate to the headquarters of KSMD Air Defence and operational subordination of the Air Defence Division. Captain Pavel Fedorovich Foris took command of 19 SBASWC (Pic. 3) Senior Lieutenant Ivan Efremovich Barbaruk became the chief of staff of a separate battalion.





*Elemenkina Valentina*



*Utkina Valentina*



*Soboleva Tatyana*

At Stalingrad deployment in 1942–1943 the battalion performed a combat mission to defend Stalingrad and Ural-Ryazan railway (Pic. 4). Observation posts (OP) of ASWC, which were deployed along the railway on the outskirts of Stalingrad, and then along the front line along the river Volga, were systematically bombed by the enemy. During the days of the Battle of Stalingrad, a large number of enemy aircraft were in the air. And on August 23, 1942, German aviation launched a massive attack on Stalingrad, destroying a significant part of the city and tens of thousands of its inhabitants. Massive bombardments were carried out to demoralise the defenders of Stalingrad and make it easier for the Wehrmacht to capture the city. At that time, the Germans had overwhelming air superiority, and it was unrealistic to repel this attack by the forces of Soviet aviation and air defence of the city.

The airstrikes continued for several days. As a result, about 40 thousand Soviet citizens died. Not only because of the power of the air strike, but also because the houses (mostly wooden), dried by the sun by mid-August, easily caught fire, and the water supply had been damaged during previous raids. The fact that oil spilled along the Volga made it very difficult to extinguish fires. A significant part of Stalingrad burned out. The Nazis subsequently noted that their offensive passed through the territory of workers' settlements, which turned into a forest of chimneys left over from houses completely destroyed by fire. This was the Apocalypse captured in German photographs [5]. Under the massive blows, the communication lines were continuously torn. The personnel of OP, despite the continuous bombing, promptly repaired the damage and transmitted reports on the appearance of an air enemy.



*Pic. 4. Stalingrad deployment of 19 SB ASWC [4].*

In the area of deployment, 35230 times aircraft flew over and were registered according to the reports of OP during the summer months.

Fighters of 19 SB ASWC went all the way with their battalion from 1941 to 1945 (Pic. 5). It is important to note that due to the skilful actions of the commander of 19 SB ASWC P. F. Foris, the personnel of the battalion suffered minimal losses at Stalingrad deployment.

In the orders of this period, separate points highlighted the procedures for placing female fighters in covered cars, providing them with sanitary supplies and hot meals at observation





Proskurina Valentina



Panisova Larisa



Pavlovets Nina

posts. Documents found in the archives testify to the attentive attitude of the battalion commander towards the girls: on November 28, 1942, a letter was sent to the commander of 19 SB ASWC from N. A. Bugrov, the father of one of the best radio operators of the battalion, a second-year student of the rail operational faculty, Lidia Bugrova. The father inquired about the whereabouts of his daughter and was disturbed by her two months of silence. In the documents of the political instructor of SB I. E. Barbaruk, a note was made: *«Inform the father about the location of the fighter and a copy of the answer (send) to Serdobs, military unit 781 that the fighter Lida Bugrova is performing a combat mission, is healthy and she has been given a lesson by the political instructor Barbaruk about the need to write letters to his father».*

Despite the tense situation, the fighters received new knowledge and training sessions were regularly held in the battalion.

Order regarding 19 SB ASWC No. 372 dated December 31, 1942:

*«Today, the battle assembly of radio operators – Komsomol girls – fighters is considered over. The 2-month radio operator training program has been completed.*

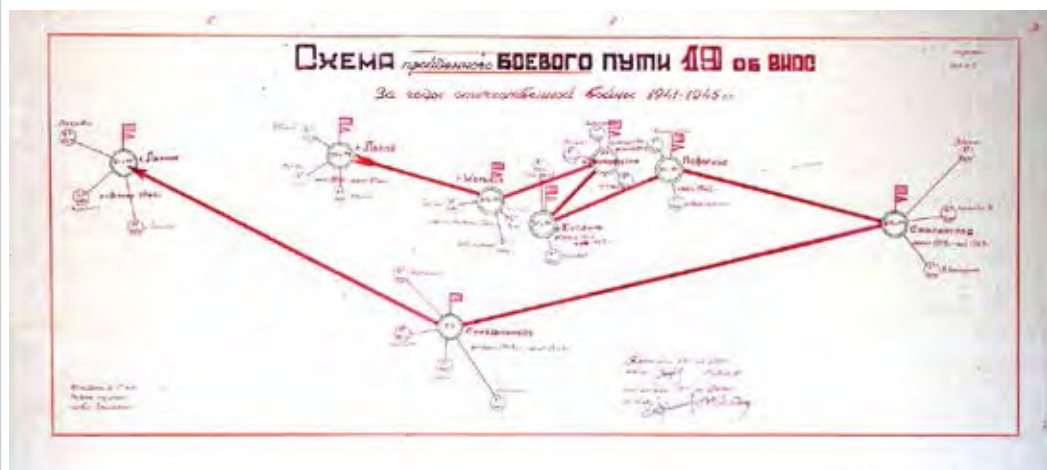
*The best examples of learning to master the program were shown by the fighters:*

1. Lavrova Z. A. (prize 100 rubles);
2. Ivanova A. G. (prize 100 rubles);
3. Utkina V. I. (prize 100 rubles);
4. Metlina N. E. (prize 50 rubles).

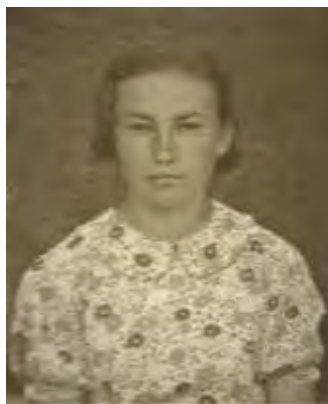
*The course was led by Lieutenant Vasyura E. V.».*

In February 1943, Margarita Zakharova, Galina Zhugan and Tatyana Soboleva, 19 SB ASWC fighters, were thanked for their excellent combat duty, excellent and good results in combat and political training.

In November 1942, MIIT students received excellent testimonials from the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> company of 19 SB ASWC, Lieutenant Biderman.



Pic. 5. Scheme of the combat path of 19 SB ASWC during the years of the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945 [4].



**Zhugan Galina**



**Deryugina Alexandra**



**Bugrova Lidia**



**Nazarova Larisa**



**Mamontova Sofia**



**Kuznetsova Nadezhda**

*From the report:*

«Corporal Nazarova Larisa (3<sup>rd</sup> year of the Faculty of Engineering and Economics): «A neat, executive fighter. She copes well with the work of a senior telephone operator.

Junior Sergeant Zhugan Galina: «An exceptionally disciplined neat fighter. She performs excellent military service at her post.

Corporal Soboleva Tatyana: «Energetic, disciplined fighter. She performs well in combat».

Valentina Utkina, a student at the Faculty of Communications at MIIT, was one of the best radio operators in the battalion. In 1944, senior sergeant Utkina was recalled to the disposal of the headquarters of the air defence division stationed in Warsaw.

The following MIIT students became the heads of observation posts:

- 1<sup>st</sup> year student of the Faculty of Tracks Nadezhda Kuznetsova;
- 4<sup>th</sup> year student of the Faculty of Engineering and Economics Margarita Zakharova;
- 1<sup>st</sup> year student of the Faculty of Railways Valentina Utkina;

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year student of the Faculty of Civil Engineering Valentina Elemenkina;

- 1<sup>st</sup> year student of the Faculty of Tunnels Elena Lebedeva.

Tatyana Soboleva and Raisa Vyarvelskaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of the Faculty of Economics at MIIT, were appointed Komsomol organizers of the companies.

All MIIT students – fighters of 19 SB ASWC received the rank of corporal, junior sergeant, sergeant. Every single one was awarded medals «For the Defence of Stalingrad», Alexandra Deryugina, Valentina Elemenkina, Sofya Mamontova, Tatyana Soboleva and Nadezhda Kuznetsova – medals «For Military Merit».

The 2<sup>nd</sup> year student of the operational faculty Larisa Panisova died in 1945.

Employees of RUT(MIIT) Museum continue research work to restore the names and life stories of MIIT students – fighters of 19 SB ASWC.

We consider it important to remember by name all the «girls»-students of MIIT, who left







*Agapova Kapitolina*

in 1942 as volunteers and became fighters of 19 SB ASWC<sup>2</sup>:

1. **Agapova Kapitolina**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study, corporal-telephonist of 19 SB ASWC<sup>3</sup>.

2. **Bugrova Lidia**, Operational faculty of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, corporal-observer of 19 SB ASWC.

3. **Vyarvelskaya Raisa**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study, junior sergeant – head of the observation post of 19 SB ASWC.

4. **Deryugina Alexandra**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, junior sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

5. **Ershova Natalia**, Faculty of Engineering and Geology of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, junior sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

6. **Zhugan Galina**, Operational faculty of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, junior sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

7. **Zakharova Margarita**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 4<sup>th</sup> year of study, junior sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

8. **Knoroz Larisa**, Faculty of Engineering and Geology of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

9. **Korobova Nina**, Faculty of Tunnels of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, corporal of 19 SB ASWC.

10. **Kuznetsova Nadezhda**, Faculty of Tracks of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, sergeant of 19 SB ASWC.

11. **Lebedeva Elena**, Faculty of Tunnels of MIIT 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study, Red Army observer of 19 SB ASWC.

12. **Mamontova Sofia**, Operational faculty of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, sergeant – head of the observation post of 19 SB ASWC.

13. **Nazarova Larisa**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 4<sup>th</sup> year of study, corporal telephonist of 19 SB ASWC.

14. **Nikishova Elizaveta**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, corporal radiotelegraph operator of 19 SB ASWC.

15. **Pavlovets Nina**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, Red Army observer of 19 SB ASWC.

16. **Pavlovskaya Elena**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, corporal telephonist of 19 SB ASWC.

17. **Panisova Larisa**, Operational faculty of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, corporal observer of 19 SB ASWC.

18. **Popova Tatyana**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, junior sergeant – head of the observation post of 19 SB ASWC.

19. **Proskurina Valentina**, Faculty of Tracks of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, Red Army observer of 19 SB ASWC.

20. **Soboleva Tatyana**, Faculty of Economics of MIIT 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, corporal observer of 19 SB ASWC.

21. **Utkina Valentina**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, corporal observer of 19 SB ASWC.

22. **Shirokova Maria**, Faculty of Railways of MIIT 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, Red Army observer of 19 SB ASWC.

23. **Elemenkina Valentina**, Construction Faculty 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study, sergeant – head of the observation post of 19 SB ASWC.

24. **Lapina Anna**, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study of MIIT, *further search for information in progress*.

25. **Lobankova Iraida**, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study of MIIT, *further search for information in progress*.

26. **Metllina Elizaveta**, 1<sup>st</sup> year of study of MIIT, *further search for information in progress*.

After demobilisation on July 20, 1945, not all the girls returned to their native university. N. Ershova, N. Korobova, M. Shirokova, M. Zakharova, L. Nazarova, E. Lebedeva,

<sup>2</sup> The list of MIIT students is verified and compared with the list of personnel of 19 SB ASWC stored in the archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and the list of students of the institute from the archive of RUT MIIT n.a. I. V. Stalin for 1942. The article contains the photos of all the students that have been found as of 23.01.2023.

<sup>3</sup> Military ranks are given in accordance with the act of awarding medals «For the Defence of Stalingrad» in 1945 (the basis of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of December 22, 1942).



Pic. 6. Exhibition project of RUT (MIIT) Museum [photo by RUT press service].

V. Utkina, R. Vyarvelskaya, T. Soboleva graduated from MIIT and worked in their specialty. Raisa Vyarvelskaya was an excellent student, received the Stalin Prize, completed her postgraduate studies, defended her Ph.D. thesis and worked as an Associate Professor at the Department of Economics, Organisation and Management of Production at MIIT. She carried out a lot of scientific and methodological work, was a member of the Council of War Veterans of MIIT. Tatyana Soboleva also completed her postgraduate studies, defended her Ph.D. thesis and taught at the Department of Political Economy of MIIT [6].

To commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad, RUT (MIIT) Museum prepared an exhibition project, which presents archival materials, photographs, sketches for the film «Stalingrad», 2013 (directed by F. Bondarchuk, production designer S. Ivanov) and works of battle painters on the theme of the Battle of Stalingrad (Pic. 6).

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