

SEPARATE TANK BATTALIONS - 1942

Although tank brigades were the standard building block of the Soviet armoured forces, independent, or separate tank battalions were still very evident in 1942, especially under the conditions of shortage early in the year when any tank formation - no matter how small - was welcome.

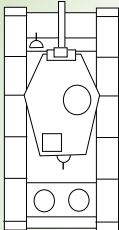
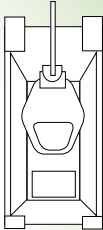
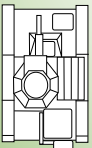
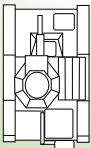
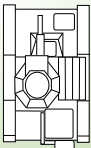
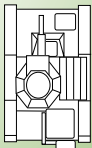
During the winter offensive in January many of the attacking rifle armies had to make do with tank battalions as their only armoured support - a drop in the ocean compared to the vast areas in which they were operating. An example of an independent battalion in this theatre was 141st Tank Battalion, attached to 4th Shock Army, which was personally commanded by Lieutenant-General Yeremenko.

On January 9th, when 4th Shock was launched southwest against the junction of the German Army Groups Centre and North, the battalion was equipped as follows:

The tanks could do no more than play an occasional role in 4th Shock's advance, and they demonstrated the paucity of Soviet tank tactics when 8 of the 141st's T-60s attacked the village of Okhvat unsupported and in line. The light tanks achieved initial success but were than knocked out or driven off by German 'tank destroyer' teams armed with grenades.

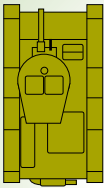
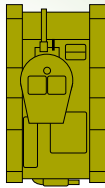
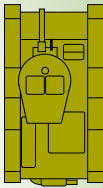
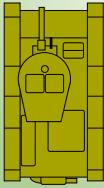
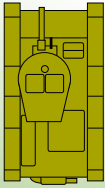
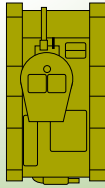
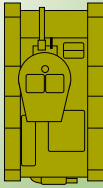
Later in 1942, during the attack on the Caucasus, the Novorossiysk Defence Area included amongst its forces two Naval infantry brigades, the aforementioned Azov Flotilla and the 126th Separate Tank Battalion. The latter was - like the Maikop Tank Brigade - equipped with obsolete vehicles, a legacy of this Front's material neglect in early 1942. When the city was attacked in August 1942 the battalion was organised as shown below:

***141st Separate Tank Battalion
9th January 1942**

<p>Heavy Tank Company KV-1 (76mm)</p> 	<p>Medium Tank Company T-34 (76mm)</p> 
<p>Light Tank Company 2 x T-60 (20mm)</p>  	<p>Light Tank Company 2 x T-60 (20mm)</p>  

*Note: some sources disagree over the designation of this unit.

**126th Separate Tank Battalion
August 1942**

<p>HQ T-26 (45mm)</p> 	<p>Light Tank Company 2 x T-26 (45mm)</p>  
<p>Light Tank Company 2 x T-26 (45mm)</p>  	<p>Light Tank Company 2 x T-26 (45mm)</p>  

Below: the T-26s of the 126th Separate Tank Battalion advance with Naval infantry on the outskirts of Novorossiysk.

