



ALEXANDR BAUROV

(St. Petersburg, Soviet Union, March 23, 1906 – February 18, 1972)



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Born on March 23, 1906, Alexandr Baurov (nicknamed Sasha) hailed from a famous artistic Roma family. His ancestors were famous for their role in the St. Petersburg and Moscow choirs.

Baurov received his first guitar lessons from prominent masters such as Aleksey Shishkin and Mikhail Shishkin. He joined the choir for the first time in 1917, where **he danced and played the guitar**. But the October Revolution soon thereafter deprived the choir of its audience, and the Roma youth began to look for other artistic outlets and means of making money.

Around 1920, Baurov started work at the Putilov factory as an assistant to a steelmaker. From 1925 to 1933 Baurov studied at the **Electrotechnical Institute of Communications**, and, after graduating, got a job as a laboratory assistant at the Academy of Communications. But art was not forgotten either. All this time, Alexander was also working in Lengosestrada in the

evenings, playing guitar in a Roma ensemble. He even took his guitar, gifted to him by his good friend and master – Passerbbsky – with him to the front. In short moments of respite, he played and sang for friends.

Baurov **volunteered for the front on the eighth day of the war**. A good technical education allowed Baurov to occupy command positions. Initially, he was the head of the communications service in the Forty-Fourth Armoured Battalion, where he had the chance to defend the Pulkovo Heights. During the attack near Krasnoye Selo, he was wounded in the arm and shell-shocked. The orderlies pulled him out of the damaged tank.

After recovering, Baurov fought in the 189th Infantry Division. After that, he was appointed **chief of communications of the First Aeronautical Division**. Photographs taken at the front give us an insight into the type of warfare the unit engaged in. The unit was responsible for sharing intelligence, specifically geographic information, for targeting enemy lines by shelling. The unit gathered the information by aerial cameras lifted by balloons into the sky, capturing photographs of enemy positions. The results were impressive: **heavy**

Soviet shells destroyed German equipment, and their fortifications were broken, and eventually, the Germans rolled back under the pressure of the Red Army. Baurov's unit would fight in the Karelian Campaign on the Karelian Isthmus, located on the Finnish-Russian border, where he would be wounded a second time, receiving damage to his thigh.

The **bravery of Baurov**, a Roma from Leningrad, was **celebrated with both promotions and awards**. In 1944 he was already a captain. His chest was decorated with the Order of the Red Star and the Red Battle Banner. Baurov also received the Order of Alexander Nevsky – an honourable and rare award – for his active participation in the battles during the Oder River crossing. In addition, he was awarded the Polish Cross of the Brave. Baurov enjoyed the victory in Leipzig, but his service did not end there. After the war, he was left in Germany to study German rocket science. And from 1949 to 1955, already an engineer-lieutenant colonel, Baurov participated in creating and launching the first domestic missiles at the Kapustin Yar test site in the Astrakhan region. The veteran died on February 18, 1972. Materials about Baurov's military career and rare front-line photographs are now in the **Museum of the Defense and The Seige of Leningrad**.

Sources and further information:

1. The biography is based on the materials of N. Bessonov's documentary research, "Roma tragedy 1941-1945: facts, documents, memories. The armed resistance," [Бессонов Н.В. Цыганская трагедия 1941-1945: факты, документы, воспоминания. Том 2. Вооружённый отпор СПб.: Шатра, 2010. — 375 с.], pp. 166-172

2. http://romagenocide.com.ua/data/files/bibliography/Bessonov_vooruzhenniy-otpor.pdf

This biography has been written by Tetiana Storozhko