

Battle for the Caucasus and «Edelweiss» Operation

In August 1942, elite troops of the Wehrmacht mountain shooters advanced along the snowy slopes of Elbrus. Soldiers were dragging tools and building materials behind them in order to gain a foothold on the Caucasian ridge.

The plan for the «Edelweiss» Operation was developed by Hitler in June 1942, when it became obvious to the Wehrmacht commander that the Blitzkrieg on the eastern front was dragging out, and they wouldn't be able to win the war with the Soviet Union at a flash speed. The Führer decides: to bleed the Red Army, all the oil necessary for the work of Soviet armored vehicles and aircraft must be taken away from it.



To do this, according to Hitler's plan, Army Group "A" under the command of General Wilhelm List should have bypassed the Caucasian ridge from the west and, having captured Novorossiysk, moved to Tuapse - one of the oil regions of the Caucasus. At the same time, another army group "B" under the leadership of Fedor von Bock went to the eastern part of the Caucasus Range to take control of Grozny and Baku. In total, to capture the Soviet oil fields, 167 thousand soldiers, 15 thousand oil specialists and more than a thousand tanks were involved.



The most unexpected blow of the Red Army was to be delivered by the mountain shooters of the Edelweiss division. This unit was to cross mountain passes unprotected by Soviet troops in the Elbrus region in order to hit the rear of the Red Army, trying to stop Army Group "A" in the west of the Caucasian ridge.

The task of the Grotto advance detachment: to capture this passage for the transition of the main parts of the division through Elbrus.

The highest mountain hotel in the Soviet Union - the so-called "Shelter of the Eleven", whose height is 4130 meters - will become the base of the 1st and 4th high mountain division of the Wehrmacht.

Five companies of the Edelweiss division, consisting of 90 people each, were dug in at a height to prepare a transition for the approaching Wehrmacht troops. On the same day, the head of mountain shooters, Heinz Grot, contacts the commander of the Edelweiss division, Hubert Lantz, who gives the order: before building special bunkers on the top of Elbrus for suitable Wehrmacht troops and moving further through the pass, mountain shooters should set the flags of the Wehrmacht at the highest points of Elbrus.

The Soviet command, which did not expect the Wehrmacht soldiers to rise to almost impregnable heights, gives the order to force the Germans out of the mountain passes by any means.

Early September 1942. The company of Grigoryants, who had never been in the mountains before, rises to the Terskol Pass at night, under cover of darkness and fog, in order to reach the mountain rifle units of the Germans in the morning and attack unexpectedly. By morning, the soldiers of the Grigoryants have climbed the pass. But by this time the fog has cleared, and the Germans simply shoot the Red Army fighters from the hill.



On August 21, at two peaks of Elbrus - eastern and western - the Germans set flags with a swastika. Just before the Edelweiss operation, two oil companies were created in Germany, which received an exclusive contract for the development of the Caucasian fields. The Luftwaffe was forbidden to bomb oil producing towers, and special equipment and pipes for pumping black gold arrived in the Soviet Union from Germany.

By the end of September, the Soviet command brought well-trained fighters - NKVD officers and professional climbers to Elbrus. But even they failed to drive the German mountain rifle troops from an almost impregnable pass.

And at that very time, in September 1942, fierce battles were fought in Stalingrad for every home literally.

German soldiers are amazed at the staunchness of the defenders of the city and do not understand what makes them literally cycling to every meter of its territory.

Understanding that the Battle of Stalingrad is likely to be lost, and the troops of the Edelweiss group may be encircled, the Wehrmacht command decides to withdraw the Edelweiss units from the Caucasus region. The Edelweiss Operation failed.

Today, all that reminds residents of Elbrus region of the Edelweiss Operation is the ruins of the "Shelter of the Eleven", which burned down in 1998. The bodies of nameless soldiers of the Red Army still appear on the surface of passes after ice melts. None of them got identified. The fate of Lieutenant Grigoryants also remained unknown. But the fate of the commander of the Edelweiss Operation, General Hubert Lanz, is known. After the capitulation of Germany, Lanz surrendered to the Americans and was sentenced by the Nuremberg Tribunal to 12 years in prison. True, the US authorities released the former head of Edelweiss after 4 years.

Операция "Эдельвейс"

1942 год



Операция «Эдельвейс» (нем. Operation Edelweiß) – кодовое название операции немецкого командования по захвату Кавказа, в частности нефтедобывающего района Грозного и Баку в ходе Великой Отечественной войны. План операции был утвержден Гитлером 23 июля 1942 года.

Силы Германии



Вид войск	Количество
Солдаты	167 000
Танки	1 100
Самолеты	900
Парашютеры	55-60

Главные силы Германии

Вильгельм Лист	Эвальд фон Клейст	Герман Гот	Петре Думитреску	Федер фон Бок
				
Командовал группой армий "А"	Командовал 1-ой танковой армией	Командовал 4-ой танковой армией	Командовал 4-ой румынской армией	Командовал группой армий "В"



Итоги

- Провал операции "Эдельвейс" войсками Германии
- Войскам Красной Армии удалось вернуть нефтяные промыслы Майкопа.
- Освобождены Калмыкия, Чечено-Ингушетия, Северная Осетия, Кабардино-Балкария, Ростовская область, Ставропольский край, Черкесская, Карачаевская и Адыгейская автономные области