

ARC OF FIRE

Chapter 9: Hooray!

Time rewound a little.

When Colonel Ivan Panzhelayevich Yegorov, the commander of the Third Rear Amur Group, saw the tank destroyed by the Divine Arrow, he immediately cheered, “Well done!”

The staff officer from the nobility, Pavlov, frowned.

But Yegorov didn’t care about that. One could tell from his name that he was not on the same page as the nobility.

The nobility liked to be meticulous when naming, and they would never choose a common name like Ivan.

Ivan Panzhelayevich Yegorov was of peasant origin, ascending to the rank of colonel through his merits in the Civil War and the Winter War. It was said that if it weren’t for the Civil War and the subsequent purging that almost wiped out the noble officers, Yegorov would never have become a colonel of the regiment.

The staff officer Pavlov, also from the nobility, had looked down on Yegorov from the beginning. When the war had just started, he even attempted to replace Yegorov in commanding the troops but was rebuffed.

Not only that, to avoid listening to Pavlov’s nagging, Yegorov went to the front lines, leaving the nearly hollowed-out regimental headquarters to the noble gentlemen.

He had thought that the noble gentlemen wouldn't dare come to the front lines, but to his surprise, Pavlov actually followed him there, murmuring complaints and picking faults even more than before.

Later, the Prussian Army's attack proved that Yegorov's experiences from the Civil War and the Winter War were indeed effective, significantly reducing the casualties of the troops.

However, Yegorov's experience couldn't negate the gap between the two sides in combat experience, weaponry, and battle preparations.

Most of the Third Rear Amur Group were new recruits, and they had not prepared for the outbreak of war at all.

In fact, the entire Empire was unprepared.

The Imperial Chancellor had assured in a broadcast just the day before the war broke out that war would not happen and that the Prussians were targeting the West.

Considering the rushed response to the battle, Yegorov was already content with the outcome.

He raised his voice and shouted to the rookies, "Don't be afraid! Just crouch behind the wall and shoot, you don't even need to aim! The enemy is human, too, they'll be scared when bullets whiz by their ears! Keep cocking the gun, keep firing! Don't think about anything else!"

As he spoke, not far from him, a Maxim machine gun was firing intensely.

Suddenly, a shell hit the sandbags in front of the machine-gun position.

The explosion instantly swallowed Yegorov's following words.

The hastily constructed fortifications couldn't withstand the tank gun.

With its stand and wheels for movement, protective plates, the entire machine gun, weighing dozens of kilograms, was lifted like a toy and overturned on the ground. ҫаНÓБĚ\$

The upper half of the machine gunner was completely blown away, and the ammunition bearer had his shoulder sheared off, exposing the white bone.

Screams filled the large room.

"Stop yelling!" Yegorov roared, "Sukabule! Assistant gunner! Get the machine gun back in action!"

As he said this, Yegorov peeked out and saw the second tank turning the street corner.

"Hmph, the second Divine Arrow will take care of you!"

As he spoke, Yegorov looked hopefully in the direction of the Divine Arrow team, then realized that smoke had already obscured the entire street.

The Prussians used smoke to cut off the line of sight of the Divine Arrow team, while ensuring the tank had visibility to fire.

The enemy indeed had combat experience.

Yegorov looked towards his rookie subordinates.

Most of the new recruits were not cowards, as the conscription area of the Amur province for the Third Rear Amur Group was known for its tough folk. Before enlisting, eight or nine out of ten had probably taken part in fights against neighboring villages over water sources; they were not lacking in courage and ferocity.

Unfortunately, courage and ferocity were useless on the battlefield. No matter how tough one was, they couldn't go up against the tanks' machine guns and cannons.

Right at that moment, Yegorov heard the whistling of shells in the sky.

As an old soldier, he immediately judged that the impact area was nearby.

Not only that, but he also discerned that the shells were coming from behind—fired by their own side.

"Sukabule!" Yegorov cursed, "The damned nobility wants to flatten us together with the enemy! Get down!"

Yegorov himself lay flat on the ground, carefully supporting himself with both hands so as not to lie completely flat, while he opened his mouth—new recruits didn't understand this and would probably be stunned into stupidity by the heavy artillery!

As he spoke, the shells landed.

But the sound of the explosion was small, as if a three-hundred-pound fat man had let out a fart.

Yegorov looked up in confusion and saw white smoke pouring in through the window.

Outside, he could faintly hear the sound of Smoke Bombs hissing.

Why Smoke Bombs?

Staff Officer Pavlov also voiced his confusion, "Why Smoke Bombs? That doesn't make sense! I never learned about this at the Suvorov Military Academy!"

Suddenly, Yegorov slapped his thigh and laughed heartily, "Brilliant!"

Pavlov was shocked, "What's going on?"

Yegorov paid no attention to the staff officer and belted out at the top of his lungs, "Brothers! Grab your weapons! Follow my charge, and chop down anyone in black uniforms! Ura!"

By this time, the smoke had already filled the room, and it was impossible to see people just a few meters away. Yegorov drew the saber that had been with him for many years, and without caring whether anyone was following, he shouted “Ura” as he took a strong step and jumped out the window from the second floor to the ground.

When he landed and felt the numbness in his feet, he continued to shout, “Amur Group! Charge! If we lose the hand-to-hand combat, we will be laughed at by women for a decade! Ura!”

The new recruits might not understand modern warfare, but they knew how to fight with weapons.

So, a thunderous shout of “Ura” echoed to the skies.

Suddenly, figures appeared in the smoke ahead, and Yegorov swung his sabre with all his might.

The slash was technically perfect, cutting only through the skin and flesh without getting stuck in the bone, just gliding over it.

The slash severed the trachea and the artery at the throat, a not-so-large wound but deadly. The soldier in black clutched his neck and fell.

Yegorov kept moving forward. The smoke obscured visibility, which was fine since enemy recognition was unnecessary in this situation—anyone approaching face-on would definitely be an enemy, just chop them down.

“Anyone coming face-on is an enemy!” Yegorov yelled, “Even if you chop the wrong person, they’re deserters! Kill them!”

In the midst of the chaos, he heard engine noise and charged toward it, straight up to a tank.

With a leap, he was on top of the tank.

Unfortunately, Yegorov had no idea how to operate the Prussians' damned contraption.

So, he pulled out a grenade, pulled the pin, and stuffed it into the largest hole on the tank—the barrel.

There was a muffled clang, but the tank showed no response.

Yegorov didn't care. A lack of response meant it wasn't loud enough, so he called out behind him, "Grenades! Give me grenades!"

Someone from within the smoke tossed up a belt with four grenades attached to it.

Yegorov shoved them one after another into the tank barrel.

Just then, the tank's hatch unexpectedly opened, and a Prussian Army officer poked his head out. With a large cap and headphones across the head pressing down on the cap, the moment he saw Yegorov, he raised his submachine gun—

Yegorov didn't have time to draw his sabre, so he used the grenade as a club, smashing it into the officer's face and promptly pulling the pin before shoving it into the tank's hatch.

The Prussian officer shouted something, but Yegorov couldn't understand.

A flash inside the hatch, and the officer immediately shut up. Yegorov took his submachine gun and tore off the Iron Cross from his collar.

"Ura!" Yegorov shouted.