

были истребитель Як-9, отличавшийся хорошей маневренностью и высокой скоростью (500 км в час), высотой полета до 6-7 тысяч метров, минимальной высотой полета до 50 метров, 37-миллиметровой пушкой, а также штурмовик Ил-2 и бомбардировщик Пе-2.

...На рассвете 19 сентября 1942 года, получив спецзадание, Виктор Грубич поднял в небо самолет Р-5 над деревней Хатенки. В люльках под крыльями самолета разместились шесть человек, которых нужно было доставить в деревню Черная Грязь, что в 7 км от Москвы. Задание хоть и ответственное, но не сложное. Полет проходил нормально. Вдруг самолет потерял управление и с пятидесятиметровой высоты рухнул на землю. Летчик ударился головой о штурвал, потерял сознание. Штурман вылетел из кабины, отделался легкими ушибами. Виктор Грубич вскоре пришел в себя, вылез из кабины и вместе со штурманом осмотрел покореженный самолет. В люльках, под крыльями они увидели раненых и погибших. Вскоре приехала машина и всех отвезли в санчасть. Началось разбирательство. Вел допросы начальник особого отдела, человек без эмоций. Дело было серьезным — потеряли прекрасных специалистов, нужных фронту. Было тревожно. После осмотра самолета выяснилось, что летчик в аварии не повинен — был перебит трос руля высоты...



Счастливые дни 1945 года. В. Грубич и Л. Чудинова
The happy days of 1945. V. Grubich and L. Chudinova

The airmen were deeply worried. Yet all of them were confident that the Red Army would quickly fend off the aggression. Nobody even could imagine that this Great Patriotic War was going to be one of the longest and by far the bloodiest this country ever fought.

Many pilots, among them Grubich, wrote petitions asking to be sent to the battlefield. The high Command, however, decided otherwise, since even there, deep in the rear, were keenly needed top pilots-instructors.

Viktor Grubich got to the frontline only on August 20, 1942. He was attached to 615 night intruder regiment of 213 division. Within five days he flew his first combat mission: under the cover of darkness he bombed Yukhnovo railway station where had amassed the Nazi armour.

Throughout the Great Patriotic War our night-time aviation was doing a tremendous job. The Nazis simply could not counter the dare-devil Russian aces who bombed to pieces their communications, supplied the partisans with weaponry, air-dropped and then picked up the spies, conducted aerial surveillance bringing invaluable information on enemy's positions and intentions.

Viktor Grubich has had his hands on the controls of many different planes including R-5, Yak-9, Il-2 and Po-2.

In his opinion of the pilot-veteran, the best Soviet war-time aircraft were Il-2 strafing plane, Pe-2 bomber and Yak-9 fighter that offered excellent agility, high speed of up to 500kmph, 6-7 thousand meters ceiling, minimum altitude of 50 meters and carried 37-mm caliber gun.

On September 19, 1942, at dawn Viktor Grubich took off his R-5 airplane from near by Khatenki village. Under the wings, in the nacelles were huddling six men to be airlifted to Chernaya Gryaz village, 7km away from Moscow. The task, albeit laden with responsibility, didn't seem complex. All of a sudden the airplane went out of control and from a 50-meter altitude crashed into the ground. The pilot Grubich had his head banged against the control column and lost consciousness. The navigator escaped with only minor injuries. He rushed to help his mate. Once Grubich came to his senses, they climbed together out of the cockpit, looked underneath the wings and saw the

blood: in the nacelles were lying dead and wounded. A truck arrived and took them all to hospital. Inquiry was launched conducted personally by the chief of anti-sabotage department — a man of utter equanimity. It was a very serious matter — those lost were outstanding specialists whom all the army mourned. Both airmen were feeling deep anxiety. But a meticulous inspection of the airplane wreckage soon revealed that the accident was not a fault of either: the elevator cable had been severed.

After recovery Viktor Grubich and his navigator returned to their combat duties. Yet many times in his career the pilot Grubich came within a whisker of fatality. He never spoke at length about that. Nor did he boast of his decorations.

'For Valour' medal, two orders of Combat Red Banner, an order of Red Star are the insignia of a true hero. In addition, Viktor Grubich wears on his lapel an order of Great Patriotic War of the first degree, many medals and an order of Gallantry, about which below.

The War went on. The Soviet Army scored strategically important victories at