

# A little about the BT-5 tank

One of the fathers of this Russian tank is the American J. Walter Christie.



Christie campaigned fiercely for his fast tanks, which could move with or without tracks, but was not met with great enthusiasm. Tank T3.

Christie's was to have greater success abroad, namely in Russia, where in 1931 they imported two copies of Christie's tank, which was so ahead of its time that it was designated "Model 1940". It quickly fell to the Russians' taste and three prototypes took part in the parade in Red Square on 7 November 1931. Within a short time the tank was put into series production and was designated "Bystrochodyij Tank" (Fast Tank).

During the 1930s, the tank was developed into the main types BT-5 and BT-7, which were equipped with a 45 mm cannon and a light machine gun (coaxial). The tank took part in all kinds of battles before and during the war, including the Spanish Civil War.

The vast majority of BT tanks were lost at the start of the war, but units that were in more isolated areas kept the gradually outdated tanks until the end of the war. Some units that had been holed up in Leningrad were still equipped with BT tanks during the fighting in the Baltic countries in the summer and autumn of 1944. The last operational action was in July/August 1945, when BT tanks took part in the massive armored thrusts against the Japanese troops in Manchuria.

Christie's design, however, needed even greater dissemination, namely in the form of the undercarriage of the T-34 tank, which was developed, among other things, on the basis of the experiences with the BT tanks.

As a curiosity, it can be mentioned that the top speed - with belts fitted - was 52 km/h; without belts it was 72 km/h! (It took half an hour to remove/install the belts; when the belts were not in use they were transported on top of the screens.)

## Sources:

*Russian Tanks, 1900-1970* by John Milsom, Arms and Armor Press, 1970, SBN 85368 054 X (this must be before the introduction of the ISBN number).

Articles in:

- *Military Modelling*, January and February 1982, April 1994 and November and December 1995
- *Airfix Magazine*, July 1968.

# BT-5 tanks

Recently, I have expanded the stock a little and made a few subtleties, which are hereby passed on for hopefully pleasant inspiration.



Here are my three BT-5 models - representing a battalion commander (left) and a tank company. I hope to expand the number a bit, but the good company RH Models has yet to get more models off the assembly lines.

The first two models are discussed in my previous article, although the middle one (see later) is slightly improved compared to the previous one. The model on the right is thus the newest addition to the family...



The undercarriage is derived from a basic hopeless resin model (BP Cast Inc. - catalog number FN-101: BT-42) that depicted a Finnish variant of the BT tank, equipped with an older English 114mm howitzer.

I had painted the wagon in the otherwise exciting Finnish blur pattern (grey, brown and light green) - but it just didn't look good enough!

The model was almost on its way to scrappage when I found out that it could be made usable.

I therefore spent most of a Sunday getting the undercarriage to look like the version from RH Models - not that that in itself is something to strive for - but then it fits with my other models.

So I sawed, drilled and glued until the result - under the given conditions - became acceptable.

I had a turret left over from my conversion of the battalion commander's tank (the one with the frame antenna) and it fit the current undercarriage reasonably well. On this tower I had - as an experiment - drilled a hole so that there was room for a tank commander. This preparatory work made this part of the exercise quite easy and it was now time to mount the figure (AB Figures) in the tower.

Although the new model is a little smaller than the other two, I think it is now doing so well that I will not hold back from using it.

The alternative to cassation could have been a buried version in the style of my Skytrex T-26 tanks, but this solution is now more useful anyway.



The pre- and post-version of the same tank from RH Models.

The model now represents the main tank in the battalion's first company.

When I originally assembled the model, I hadn't changed the turret to accommodate a tank commander - it was only afterwards that I came to carry out the experiment mentioned above, which benefited me with my latest BT tank. But since a couple of AB Figure's tank commanders with signal flags have just come into my possession, it was a necessity that this relationship be changed.

I therefore grabbed the drill and drilled out the tower. After that, I fabricated a hatch from a small piece of plastic sheet and mounted it together with two small pieces of plastic that are to simulate the hinges of the hatch. Hatch and hinges were glued to the resin tower with second glue.

Experience: It is clearly best to carry out such operations before the model is assembled and painted - then you avoid having to "restore" your previous efforts.

The signaling context in the models is now as follows: The battalion commander receives and passes on

his orders via radio (shown by the frame antenna). The company commander receives his orders via radio (shown by the stick antenna) and he gives his orders to the platoons via signal flags (shown by the tank commander). The platoons acknowledge the order by carrying it out (the wagon is not equipped with a radio). Whether other receipt procedures existed is not known, but presumably it was as I imagine.

The order given by the company commander using his red signal flag is: *Deploy!* If you imagine that the figure is moving the signal flag from side to side, then the order is: *Enemy armor! In position!*

If the signal flag was yellow (the tank was equipped with a red and a yellow signal flag), then the order would be: *Follow me! Column!* But I will show that variant on another figure.

It is possible to paint the figure's boiler suit in several ways: blue, grey-green or, as here, in khaki. I chose this solution (Humbrol 26) so that the figure matches my other tank crews.



The cap is in the perhaps slightly "boring" version in khaki (26) - the standard headgear for Russian officers during the Great Patriotic War.

Other options had been:

- Black leather, which was used in the first half of the 1930s, and which may well have survived until 1941.
  - Gray puld, black hat band and glossy black shade. An exciting variant that I first tried on the figure.
- However, I wasn't happy with the result, as I don't think it suited the figure very well.



Now where did the steel gray uniform parts come from? In 1935, a special steel gray uniform was introduced for the panzer troops, as they wanted to emphasize the special elitist status of this type of weapon.

The headgear - cap or brimmed hat - was worn throughout the war together with the uniforms introduced later.

The collared gloves are in dark brown [170 + semi-gloss lacquer (135)] leather. The strap is light leather [62 + semi-gloss lacquer (135)].

The signal flag is painted red (60) and the pole in light wood (62). At first I had chosen a dark brown (170), but to achieve a contrast in relation to the collared gloves, I chose the light color instead.

The figure's boots, which cannot be seen after it is mounted in the tower, are black (85).

## Sources

1. *Soviet Armor Tactics in World War II - Red Army Armor Tactics from Individual Vehicle to Company, According to the Combat Regulations of 1944* af Charles Sharp, Nafziger, 1999.
2. *Tank and AFV Crew Uniforms since 1916* af Martin Windrow, Patrick Stephens Ltd., 1979, ISBN 0-85059-363-8.
3. *Uniforms of The Soviet Union 1918-1945. Red Army, Red Air Force, Red Navy, GPU, OGPU and NKVD* af David Webster og Chris Nelson, Schiffer Military History, 1998, ISBN 0-7643-0527-1.

## Closing

The signaling subtleties that I have now incorporated into my models have no practical significance in war games - everything could in principle be implemented with cardboard pieces with numbers or troop insignia printed on them. It is the kind of finesse that allows for some variation in the wargame units and at the same time illustrates the conditions under which real-life soldiers had to fight.

And then it was an excellent occasion to write another little report...

Per Finsted

**Read more and see pictures and drawings here:**

<http://www.battlefield.ru/bt5.html>

[http://www.gis.minsk.by/ironage/tanks/MODELS/bt5\\_2.htm](http://www.gis.minsk.by/ironage/tanks/MODELS/bt5_2.htm) BT-5 tanks in model