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Director of WWII Propaganda Film Receives 'Historical Accuracy Award'

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28 Panfilovtsy trailer / YouTube

The Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) has given director Andrei Shalopa an award for "fidelity to historical truth" for his recently World War II film, 28 Panfilovtsy (The 28 Panfilov Men) – which tells a tale many historians agree is a fabrication.

The award was presented to Shalopa at "War and Myths," an exhibit organized by the society. Before the ceremony, RVIO Scientific Director Mikhail Myagkov praised the film highly.

"If a single article in Red Star [the Red Army's newspaper during WWII] was as valuable as several [army] divisions, then this film is worth several divisions, maybe even an army, which can defend our historical truth," Myagkov said.

Films like 28 Panfilovtsy "guard consciousness and identity," he added.

Shalopa himself thanked both the RVIO for the award and the Ministry of Culture for its help with a crowdfunding campaign for his film. He expressed particular gratitude to controversial

Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky.

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According to the legendary narrative, in late November 1941, when the Germans were moving on Moscow, a group of 28 Red Army soldiers under the command of General Ivan Panfilov heroically held off a column of German tanks near the village of Dubosekovo. In the course of several days, they destroyed 18 German tanks before being killed themselves.

During the production of Shalopa's film, a debate erupted in Russian society over the accuracy of the story. An investigation in the late 1940s revealed that the original Red Star article was fabricated. While the report was shown to Josef Stalin himself, the legend remained the government's official narrative.

In 2015, Russia's state archive service published a 1948 memo from then-Soviet Chief Military Prosecutor Nikolai Afanasyev, which declared the story to be a fabrication.

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