



Interview: Cristobal Vergara

We are happy to introduce you one of the world-greatest modelers for Soviet armour, an author for numerous articles for modeling magazines, our Spanish colleague, Cristobal Vergara! He just released his new website sovietmodeler.com, presenting about one hundred Soviet (and not only Soviet) outstanding models!

Dear Cristobal:

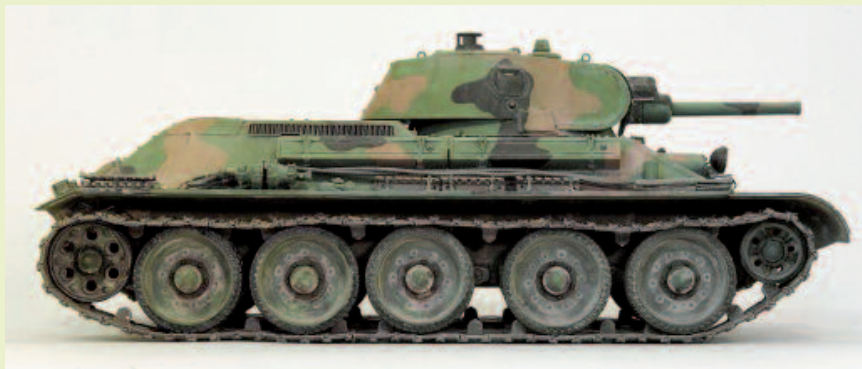
1-We are grateful for your time and happy that you are ready to answer some our questions!

Oh no, Thanks to you for giving me this opportunity to tell about me.



2-We know that you are one of the most experienced modelers for Soviet armor outside Russia.

How did it happen that a guy from Spain found an interest in Soviet armor?
iBy chance! Always I liked the modeling in my childhood and began as everybody with a model of Tiger or a Mustang. But a pair of friends of mine (older ones) built some Soviet models which I liked too much. They had some western publications with profiles of Russian A/C and they said to me that these books had a lot of mistakes. I ask myself for the reason of so many errors and the poor quality of the photos. I investigated by myself, but in western books always found the same, thus I decided to search on the other side, in the soviet... and I liked what I found: a mystery paradise that all people unknown. The absolute ignorance and scorn on this subject in the West it was unjust and it pushed to me to choose the Soviet "side".





3-Maybe the Soviet menace which was a wide-spread fear of the Cold war stimulated your interest to russian tanks?

As I said was the lack of information but I grow on the normal anticommunist and catholic education of Franco dictatorship. When I was a teenager I discovered that Franco was not the "hero" as he named and in fact I lived in a country without freedom. Sometime after I asked myself that perhaps USA also does not say the true, again I search on the other side ... and I discovered the absolutely lie of the west propaganda. All this helped me to "understand" and liked the Russian side.

4-Has it something to do with Russian history or culture or politics? Or it's just a military vehicles, that you are found of?

At the outset my meaning interest was to obtain information about Soviet stuff for my models, but after to contact with Russian people (pen pals on late '80 and meet persons on mind '90) I tried to know more about the culture and the history of the Soviet Union or Russia. I like it much and I read many books of history, novels and biographies. Here in Spain, Russia still is an unknown country



and many TV or newspaper only show notices of Russia about great disasters or the politic-mafia connection whereas when I travel to your country everybody answer me about Real Madrid or Barcelona soccer team and it bothers to me very enormously so.... my favorite team is Atletico Madrid! We must an effort to known us.

5-Have you noticed some estetical features of Soviet armor? Brutality or roughness or may be some grace?

Brutality? ..and all tanks are roughness. No, I think the special feature perhaps is the simplicity. I'm work on aeronautic and when I see a real Mig-21 I was surprised how were solved some technical problems on this plane. For me it's clear that a T-34/76 is more nice than a Panzer IV or a T-70 more esthetical than a Stuart tank.



6- Have you ever had a chance to touch the armor of any Soviet tank? If so, what did you feel at this moment?

Well, it was in Spain in '80. Here there are a lot of T-26 from Spanish Civil War but it are painted with Spanish flag and St Andrew cross and therefore you can't feel as a "Soviet" item. But my first amazing experience was in 1992 when a pair of Russian MiG-29 come to Reus (Tarragona) for an international air show. I take my car and drove the 600 Km away to see it. It was amazing for me see for first time a real exhibition of russian operational A/C. Events as this "hook me" for all my life as devout of the russian stuff.

The real soviet tanks I saw on the central Museum of Armed Forces in Moscow a pair of years after when I traveled for first time to Russia and of course when you stay near of a KV-2 or "Pion" launcher you feel a "special" sensation.

7- Just a couple weeks ago your new website sovietmodeler.com was launched. Can you tell us what it's mission is?

First is a showcase of my works. When I began this project I don't conscious of everything I done in these last 25 years and the first surprised was me. A lot of models, drawings, articles. In first time I thanked on a web with few models but it was raised, raised... and it show in total 88 different models, 31 drawings and 900 photos. This not all models I build on these years in fact only the half but it are the better.

Second I would like to be a benchmark with others modelers enthusiast of the Red Army. We can find a lot pages about German, American or Israeli Armies but few about the Soviet Army. As fan of this subject I must effort for change this situation.

And finally as method of promotion mine as modeler for write articles on other magazines.

8- We must admit, web design is great, and remind that of a propaganda images or some computer games like RED ALERT. What inspired you for such design?

I don't know these game and many others. In fact my average goal is a second level on Tetris, no more.)))

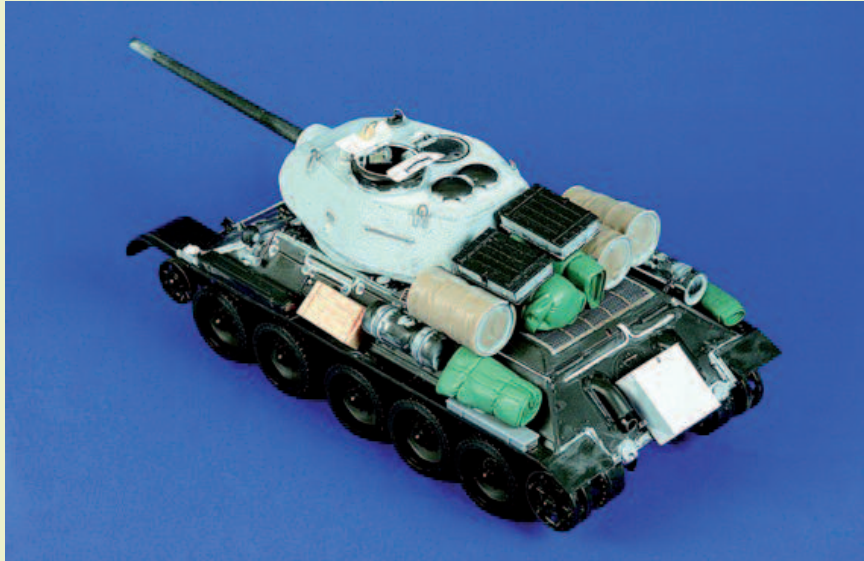
The design was made in collaboration with Carlos Pedregosa, an outstanding web master friend mine. In the beginning you always had in mind other thing but when you developed it you must choose many times into an "ideal" design and a "real" option. Now you can see the result of months of work. Always I wanted so the red colour was the protagonist. I know the use of symbols as the sickle and the hammer, red flags and stars are too obvious for the russian people and I recognize so I thought on the western modeler instead russian, then I haven't the sufficient capacity and skill to do it in Cyrillic.



9-What was your modeler career? How it all had started? We are quite ignorant about modeling life in Europe in 70-s or in 80-s and that is very interesting. What was it like?

Oh, long, long time ago .. I began in middle of '70 as any teenager, without paint my Airfix or Revell models and slowly I raised my level but on these years the economic situation on Spain was very bad, nobody can get an airbrush. My first serious models was in early of '80 but I paint with a very rough airbrush and a home-made "compressor" with a pedal pump and a tyre. In the middle of these decade the reference was the belgian Verlinden although I liked more the american Shepperd Paine. From him I learn the technique of "dry brush" so I practiced for many years and I refined it a lot. As I become an aeronautic draughtsman it help me for make correct drawings as basic for my scratch or conversions projects.





10-In the new century modeling became something completely different with new materials and techniques, like MIG pigments for example. Had it some influence on you? (Well we see it had by your models, of course)

Yes, on the first years of the millennium it was conscious that my painting style was obsolete and boring. The techniques of MiG were in their apogee and I began to experiment with these techniques but for a person who took to so many years doing models it was very difficult to change and always I have been timid and moderate at the time of shaping them in my models. My models are a mixture of old and modern techniques in which no predominates one. I don't like the excessive contrast, I believe so all must be very, very smooth and merge.



11-By the way, what is your opinion on Miguel Jimenez? Some people here think he is one of the greatest modeler in the world.

MiG is a master but his main goal is "to have invented" novel techniques and use of diverse pigments. Exist better modelers than he so are developed their theories more "far" but all we are disciples to him. He always will be the person so revolutionize our world. Also he "globalized" his theories thanks to Internet. Although there are remarkable differences between my models and theirs models. The meaning is my skill level on painting on where I can't get the same as Miguel Jimenez. Other is so he don't use long time for build a model but instead I can take several months in making a model, for my it isn't a problem.



12-The Spanish Modeling School or Style – what is it? Is there some? Do you belong it?

Yes, exist the Spanish school. In the beguine was named for figures modelers. In the middle of '90 the best painters of figures was spanish as J.M., Gamarra, Rodrigo Hernandez-Chacon and Raul La Torre. They won in all European contests with novel methods of acrylic paints. Later a group of modelers of vehicles, led by MIG but also Joaquin Garcia Gazquez, Ruben Gonzalez or Javier Redondo repeat the same during this decade. Their mark is the novel use of pigments and painting technique as mapping, shadow by planes, etc...

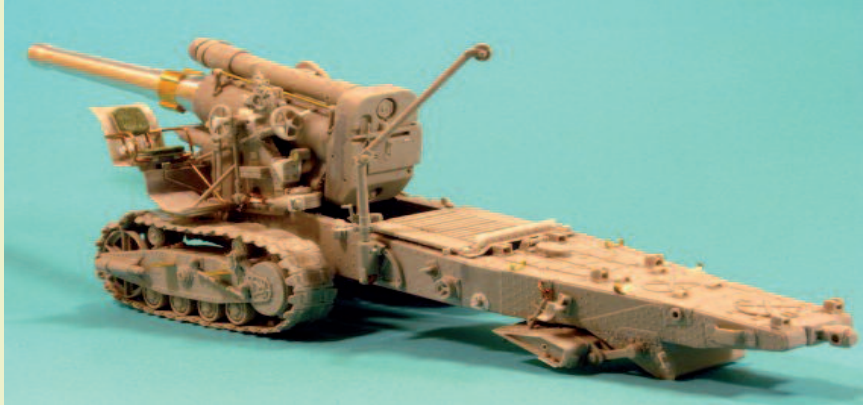
With they I share the... nationality, no more because I can't say that I belong to that school. I am previous, in those years my painting was outclassed and I never added myself with emphasis to those techniques.



13-Some of your models are dedicated to Civil War in Spain. So we wonder which side you're on – Frankists or Republicans? What is general opinion in modern Spain about this war?

Of course my side are the republicans. Me and my ideas are on the opposite side to the "national" band. Remember: the single country in help to Republicans was the Soviet Union.

The opinion about the war still it generates a great controversy here. Is incredible but still is a "open wound". Believe me so still exists in Spain hundred of mass grave of republican executed without being able to be buried with dignity by their family. Any attempts to do it always have been stopped them by some politicians and judges.



14-You visited Russia quite a lot of times, what was your general impression of the country and it's people? What were the main reasons for your visits?

Yes, ten times, always to visit MAKS (Moscow AeroSpace Exhibition) in August except one on September for visit Kubinka on the tank-man day. I work on EADS (European Aero&Defence&Space Company) and also liked much the Russian Aviation. On these exhibitions you can see also missiles, SAM system, etc. and I make a lot of photos for my archive. On the past it was very important so I use on my articles and few people had it. Now anybody can obtain information of any item on the web. Also I use my travels for obtain models, magazines and books and of course for meet with my russian friends.

About my general impression of your country I must say so I love Russia, of course not the politics but its history and specially the people: are warm and close to Spanish character. On your country I find friends for all my life. I don't like the vodka but I appraised jewels like "Baltika 6" (famous Russian dark beer).

15-What cities have you visited and which did you like best?

Oh few, always Moscow and a pair of times St. Petersburg. Of course I like more Moscow. Peter also is a charismatic city but sometimes remember me to a scandinavian city. Moscow only remember me to Russia.

16-Have you met any Russian modelers? Or maybe you know some Russian modelers from the web. How do you think, can their models compete those by Europeans? (Besides our Studio of course, we can for sure:)))

Yes, all my russian friends are modelers but of aircrafts, not armour. My best friend is Valery Pankov. He publish many article with drawings on magazines and books and also is a master of the scratchbuild on 1/48 scale. He made outstanding models as Yak-25M, Mig-9, Mig-25PD, etc..



Other is Pavel Kolesnikov, and collaborate with M-Hobby and build a lot of rare soviet a/c in vacuform and had a rich collection of it. Many years ago when I visit Russia first time I notice so the general level was low in special on paint phase, but on this decade some Russian modelers are achieved the best top level. In figures some better of the world are Russian. I saw surroundings models on the web so come from russian modelers although still they not visit the meaning contest of Europe as the western modelers still not visit the russian contest. We live very far.



17-Have you noticed some kind of Russian modeling style? Something special?

Yes, is the tendency for build scratch's or great conversions. In fact the Russian modeler is more "complete", build a lot more than the western modelers and not fear to a hard job of the building phase. Many western modelers only get models (always good as Tamiya or Dragon) added the aftermarket products as resin, photoetched and tracks and paint (very good) they are incapable to make a box with plastic or make a hand rail with rod brass.

The russian magazines as M-Hobby always publish a lot of good drawings. You can see dozen of western magazines so NEVER are publish it. For many western modelers it not necessary: only mount pieces and added aftermarket products. If need extra hand-build work is not interesting.

18-Would you be interested visiting Siberia (it's there we live ourselves, Novosibirsk city)? So called "Heart of Mother Russia".

Of course, six years ago I try it but with my job, when there were contacts between EADS and NAPO (Novosibirsk Aircraft Factory) and some people visit Sukoi factory. I offered volunteer but it was only for personnel of high rank. For myself is difficult. There aren't not direct flights to this city since Spain. I said only visit Russia for MAKS and I unknown if there an attractive event as MAKS on these city.



19-Are you interested in Soviet history, WW2 history in general? What you feel then some so called historians try to rewrite it? Defending Waffen SS volunteers, NeoNazi marches in Baltic countries, the Occupation hysterics in Poland and so on. Most yankees think it was General Patton who killed Adolf Hitler personally with his Colt and won this war)))

Of course I'm interesting on the Soviet history and WW2. I read many books and is true so some writers when speak about Leningrad siege only named the cannibalism, on Berlin battle all was violations and Stalingrad describes the detailed suffer of the VI Army. Is the legate of the cold war and the total triumph of capitalism. All western news media are controlled by reactionaries and zionist politics and any critics of it are branded as terrorist. We must avoid it and put clear all facts for everybody know the real history and judge for himself.

20-You prefer to build not only the tanks and armored cars but the airplanes, ships and even star wars! Why does your hobby is so multilateral?

I make models since more of 35 years ago and well, all are... !machinesi As aeronautic technical I'm interested on any complicate machine and when the aesthetic of any aircraft or tank astonished me and there are a good kit of it I want build it, soviet or not. In the beginning I build models of military vehicles and aircrafts in half part. Now about the 80% are vehicles and the rest aircrafts, submarines, ships and star wars models and sometimes I added some figures to my vehicles and perhaps in the future I'll make some little dioramas.



21-We are very interested in your modeling secrets, if there are such. Can you tell us about some of your techniques?

Oh yes now I reveal my "secret" It is.... iWork, work and work!

Sorry but I haven't secrets. I never invent something and only I can give some advices.

All aspects of the model must be perfect: Build, Paint and accuracy with real item. Many modelers are obsessed with the paint-work. It's wrong so it is only a chapter of the model. We must be obsessed with the three basic aspects and therefore is the triple amount of work. Many times we can't raise the level we wanted for a model. The solution: Try, try and try and for it again we return to iWork, work and work!

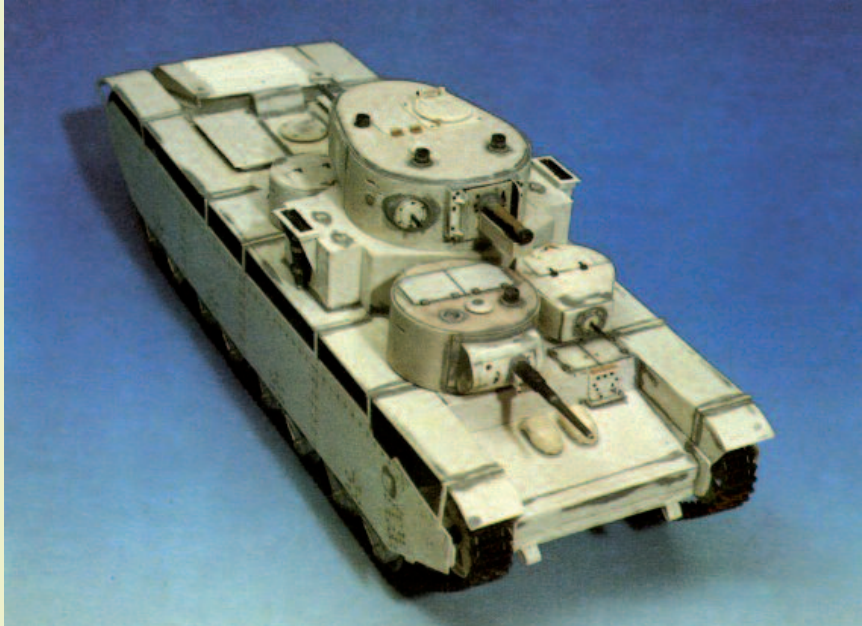
I always start the model with the original photo of the item so I can build. It is necessary to look at it many, many, many times. It reveals all: Details, paint appearance, damages and many ideas.

I think few people look at it carefully. You never achieved a real appearance only look at the paint diagram of the instruction sheet.

A personal like is the use of White Spirit for the oil paints. I think you always get better results with it.

We never must think so our better model is the latest: Always must be the next.





22-What WIPs do you have right now? Can you share some images?

On work bench I have a lot of models. Some are a very long projects so come very slowly as a Leopard 2 E, M1A1 Abrams or a Kirov Nuclear Cruiser and unknown when I follow with it. Others are models so I'm work now but still unfinished to build: Maz-537, BT-7 and T-34/76 Formochka and I don't want show parts. The latest models I finish to mount are: S-60 Stalinets Tractor and a B-4 Gun. I'm paint some models but still unfinished as Kilo submarine, Mig-17F and Y Wing. The latest models I'm finish totally are a Type 74, T-34/76 STZ, KV-220 and SU-100.

23-Can you tell about your ASU-85 project? It's really amazing!

I always liked this propelled gun and when Dragon released the Shilka model fourteen year ago I decided build it, using the wheels and tracks from the model kit and using blank plastic sheet for the rest. !The gun is part of a brushy I win with it a gold award on AMT (Torrent, Spain) contest.

The glory of the scratch models is in top high level but is very mayfly. You get great acclamations from others modelers but when there are a new model available of it, nobody want see it and judge not interesting. This is the reason I left it many years ago. The next year Trumpeter must released a plastic kit of ASU-85.



24-The totally scratchbuilt T-35 is very impressive! Being built in 1980`s this model is possibly the first one in 1/35th scale! Could you tell a little about the building of this monster?

No, I saw on "Military Modeler" american magazine but with less quality and many mistakes. It enclosed drawings so I take as basic for I draw a new by myself. For example is the first with the not symmetrical central tower for the turret. Was a special project for the first Spanish encyclopedia of modeling. I get with it a bronze award on Euromilitaire '89, my first international contest. Except the tracks (from a pair of Panzer IV) all is hand-made. For the running gear I maked an original set and copy it on white metal. The turrets are a wood cylinder lined with plastic. The rest is made with plastic sheet and rod. But please, is a very old kit from i25 years ago! Now, all on it is outclassed. I prefer speak about my latest scratch: KV-220.

25- ¿Are you return again to make scratch?

Yes, but now I choose very rare items as prototypes and there are less risk so it will be released as injected kit as KV-220. I would like show on my web on a pair of years all KV's versions. Now enclosed in novelty a pair of photos. Also I build a Krasnaya Zvezda armour train but it still is unpainted.

26-Your articles are publishing in numerous model magazines. Would you like to see one of them on the pages of russian magazine M-Hobby?

Of course, in fact for me is a meaning target, I don't speak Russian but some friends mine can translate it. I hope get contact with the magazine and see as something real.

27-What would you like to wish to your colleagues in Russia?

Of course: Please visit Spain but not only its beaches, left Marbella for the mafia and come to Madrid. Is a nice city I'll show to any russian modeler. Or we can meet on MAKS on August 2011. Everyday can meet me also on sovietmodeler.com

Pavel Cherepanov, Vladimir Yashin