

## 138<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division, 62<sup>nd</sup> Soviet Army, Stalingrad 1942



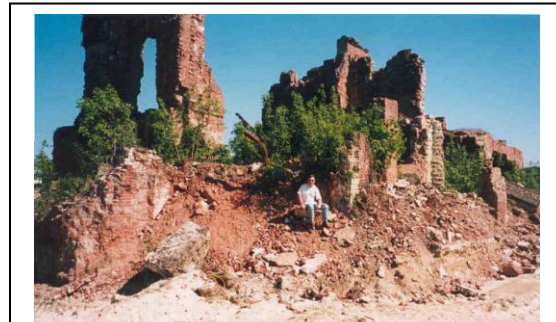
Col. Lyudnikov, 138<sup>th</sup> Rifle  
Stalingrad, Oct 1942

The 138<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was formed at Leninkan (today, Gyumri, Armenia) in the Transcaucas Military District in 1939 and fought in the Winter War against Finland. The Division was destroyed at Ketch in May of 1942 and reformed the same month. Transferred to the Stalingrad District, the Division joined the 62<sup>nd</sup> Army under Chuikov in mid October, 1942. The 62<sup>nd</sup> Army was tasked with defending Stalingrad to the last man and enforcing the famous “Not one step back” order #227 by Stalin. Col. I Lyudnikov, commanding the 138<sup>th</sup> ID, (see left photo) moved his troops (344<sup>th</sup>, 650<sup>th</sup> and 768<sup>th</sup> rifle Regiments supported by the 285<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment) into the area north and east of the Krasnaya Barrikady factory on October 16, 1942 just prior to a major German assault on the Red October Factory District.

The German assault over the next week saw massive casualties on both sides as the German Sixth Army under Paulus and the Russian 62<sup>nd</sup> Army under Chuikov mauled each other in the ruins of Stalingrad. Major actions in the Red October District, Central Stalingrad and Mamayev Kurgan took place repeatedly for the same positions as they changed hands back and forth. Instrumental in the Red October Factory District defense, the 138<sup>th</sup> Infantry held the Chemist Shop (White House) and the Commissioner’s House (Red House) against repeated German combined arms attacks. The relentless German assaults pushed the 62<sup>nd</sup> army into a smaller and smaller portion of land along the Volga.

Russian supplies were ferried across the Volga at night and wounded back to safety. The skies over Stalingrad during the day were not controlled by either side. Only 1 in 10 of the original members of the 138<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division survived the month of combat in the ruins of Stalingrad unscathed. (see map)

Operation Hubertus in early November was the last major attempt by the Germans to oust the 62<sup>nd</sup> Red Army from Stalingrad. An assault on November 11<sup>th</sup> crushed the Russian 95<sup>th</sup> and 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions on the left flank of the 138<sup>th</sup>. Col. Lyudnikov and the remnants were completely isolated from the 62<sup>nd</sup> army in a narrow corridor approximately 400 yards by 100 yards along the Volga just east of the Red October factory. Continued German assaults pushed the 138<sup>th</sup>, 308<sup>th</sup> and 244<sup>th</sup> remnants into an area known as “Lyudnikov’s Island”. (see right photo) Chuikov repetitively called and assured Lyudnikov that help was forthcoming. Chuikov had no help to send and the signals were pure bluff for the Germans to hear. The survivors were supplied by Soviet U-2 biplanes dropping bags of food and ammunition into the small pocket. Most of the supplies fell to the Germans. The defender’s slogan was “There is no ground on the other side of the Volga”. Soviet Artillery across the Volga was a major defensive asset. The pocket of the 138<sup>th</sup> survivors defended the last bastion held by the Russians in the Red October District. The Germans were unable to budge the Soviets from Lyudnikov’s Island and were forced to break off the attacks when the Soviet Operation Uranus broke through Axis lines both north and south of Stalingrad.



Lyudnikov’s Island

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Soviet infantry advances at Stalingrad, 1942



Burning Fritz out of Stalingrad, 1942

The 138<sup>th</sup> remained in the Stalingrad area over the winter months and successfully removed the Germans from their dugouts and strongpoints until the surrender of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army. (see photos above) The 138<sup>th</sup> was designated the 70<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division and fought at Kursk, Lvov and Prague. The unit was one of the most decorated units in the Soviet Army with 2 Orders of the Red Banner and Orders of Suvorov, Kutuzov and Khmel'nitsky. Col. Lyudnikov was promoted and decorated later commanding the 39<sup>th</sup> army at Vitebsk. As a side note....Nikita Khrushchev was a political officer in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Army.

### REFERENCES

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