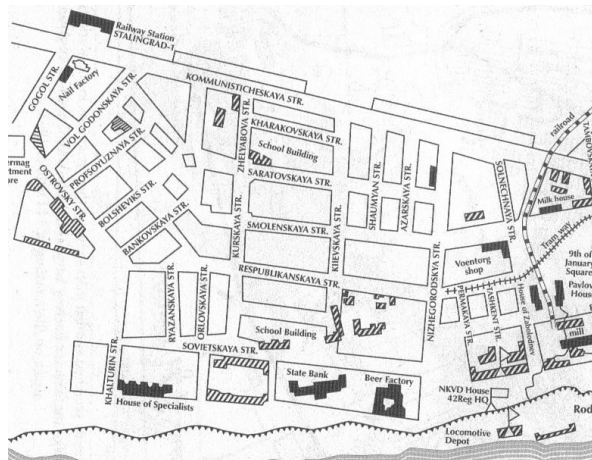


“MAY WE ALL BE HEROES DEFENDING STALINGRAD!”
1st BATTALION, 42nd REGIMENT, 13th GUARDS RIFLE DIVISION
 by
 Mike Pike

September 14, 1942. The situation was desperate for the Soviet defenders of Stalingrad. The Soviets needed to buy time to shore up their defense. The task fell to the newly arrived 13th Guards Rifle Division. General Major Alexander Rodimtsev, Commander of the 13th, and the Commander of the Soviet 62nd Army, Vasily Chuikov, devised a daring plan. After night-fall, they would send a reinforced Battalion through the City to recapture the Central Railway Station. The plan was to provoke the Germans and thereby tie up as many troops as possible in their inevitable counter-attack. This task fell to Lieutenant Chervyakov’s 1st Battalion, 42nd Rifle Regiment, 13th Guards Rifle Division. The Guardsmen’s attack on the Central Railway Station in the early morning hours of September 15th was a success. In savage fighting, the Soviets were able to beat off numerous German counter-attacks. The evening of the 15th, the German Luftwaffe bombed the Central Railway Station setting it ablaze. Many Guardsmen were killed and the survivors abandoned the Railway Station. The close quarter fighting continued on the railway platforms and in the rail yards. The Battalion fell back to the Nail Factory where fighting was workshop to workshop. On the 17th, Chervyakov was severely wounded leaving Deputy Commander Lt. Feodseyev in charge of the defense. The 1st Battalion’s situation report for the 20th concluded with the statement “MAY WE ALL BE HEROES DEFENDING STALINGRAD!” On the 22nd, Feodseyev moved his command post to the basement of the Univermag department store. Lt. Anton Dragan was left in command of the Guardsmen holding the Nail Factory. The Germans closed in from three sides over running the



Battalion HQ. With Feodseyev killed, the command of the Battalion fell to Dragan. With the last 100 Guardsmen of the Battalion, Dragan was surrounded in the Nail Factory. That night, Dragan’s men broke out of the Nail Factory and made their way to a ruined house on Krasnopiterskaya Street on the Volga embankment. Only 40 Guardsmen reached this final stongpoint. Dragan’s men held this house for 5 days. Reduced to only 12 men, Dragan’s Guardsmen threw stones and fired off their last ammunition. Resolved to fight to the death one of the Guardsmen took his bayonet and carved a fitting epitaph on a wall

“Rodimtsev’s Guardsmen fought and died for their country here”. Concentrated fire from German tanks finally collapsed the building. After darkness fell, Dragan and the last 5 survivors of the 1st Battalion clawed their way out of the rubble. These 6 wounded men were all that returned to the Soviet lines. The sacrifice of the 1st Battalion, 42nd Regiment, 13th Guards Rifle Division was not in vain. The Soviet’s were able to hold the City by the narrowest of margins. Two months later, the Red Army launched a massive counter-attack which encircled and crushed the German 6th Army.