

Document for a Medal for the Defense of Odessa, awarded on 12 September 1944 to Sergeant Major Petr Sokolov.

The document shows an ink stamp of the Ordzhonikidze Infantry Officer School and is hand-signed by its commander Col. Zadorin.

The document is in good condition. It has been folded several times for storage. Although it has developed separations at the edges along the fold lines, the document is sound. Some of the folds have been strengthened with clear tape applied to verso. There are no missing parts or significant wear to the edges; the document is clean having only some minor spots and normal age toning. The text is completely legible.

Comes with a photocopy of the award decree for the Odessa Medal issued by the Ordzhonikidze Officer School where Sgt. Maj. Sokolov was apparently enrolled at the time. According to the decree, Sokolov took part in the defense of Odessa as a squad leader of the reconnaissance scout company of the 157th Rifle Division. Based on the order of battle information available in the Vol. VIII "Red Legions" by C. Sharp, this division arrived to Odessa by sea in late September from Taman Peninsula to reinforce the beleaguered garrison that had been isolated by the Nazi advances. It remained in the city through the end of the next month, until the end of the heroic defense, and its surviving troops were successfully evacuated by the Soviet Black Sea Fleet to fight another day - most prominently, in the December 1941 landing on the Kerch Peninsula in Crimea. In May of the following year, the division took severe losses when the Crimean Front crumbled under the German Trappenjagd offensive, but bulk of its forces escaped once again to Taman; from there, the division was sent to fight at Stalingrad as part of the 64th Army. Its performance at Stalingrad was so remarkable that it earned it the title of a Guards unit, and it was re-designated 76th Guards Rifle Division.

We can only guess at this point about Sgt. Maj. Sokolov's exploits while he was serving as a recon squad leader with this illustrious division. His conduct apparently had been impressive enough judging by the fact that he was sent to an officer school. We can assume that he probably got commissioned before the end of the war, and that his service record - as well as record of any decorations he may have earned - should be available in the Russian archives. His Odessa award document may well be worth further research.

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