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## Nakhimov Medal, Variation 1, #1062, awarded on 16 February 1945 to Seaman Aleksandr Biryulin (Александр Михайлович Бирюлин), helmsman of the Submarine M-102 of M class, Series XII, Baltic Fleet.

The name of the recipient and award serial number are listed in the catalog *Cavaliers of the Nakhimov Medal* by Nikolay Yefimov (C. 2012, St. Petersburg)

In brass; measures 44.6 mm in height incl. eyelet, 36.1 mm in width; averages 2.8 mm thick on the edge; weighs 21.5 g not including the suspension and connecting link. The serial number is engraved in the manner standard for Variation 1 (serial number range of 1 through approximately 1550). There is a strong - albeit anecdotal - evidence that some of the pre-numbered Variation 1 specimens didn't pass the quality inspection due to inherent weakness of their eyelet construction; those were melted down at the mint. Therefore, the true number of Variation 1 specimens issued may be as little as 70% of what the serial number range alone would suggest.

The medal is in fine condition. There are a moderate wear and scratches - most likely, from careless cleaning - to the raised points of the bas-relief portrait, but most of its details are still well-defined. The medallion also shows numerous small dings and contact marks throughout. There are two mild bumps to the edge at approximately 7 and 10 o'clock positions, not too glaring. Very attractive even patina to brass on both sides, free of blemishes or oxidation spots, while traces of the original "gilt" mint luster are still visible in recessed areas, especially on the reverse near the anchor and anchor chain. The eyelet shows heavy wear but remains sound.

The medal comes on an original WW2 suspension, a two-layer model in steel with a self-locking pin. The connecting link has been cut but appears to be of the period. The ribbon is old, possibly of the period as well; although showing a minimal amount of soiling, it is still very nicely preserved and sound. Overall, a well-worn but attractive example of the scarce early version of the Nakhimov Medal.

Aleksandr Biryulin joined the Soviet Navy in May 1942 at the age of 19. After completing the necessary training in 1943, he was assigned as a helmsman to the submarine M-102 of the Baltic Fleet. The sub was of the M class, unofficially known as Malyutka ("Baby") - the smallest in the Soviet wartime arsenal. It was designed in the early 1930s during the heightened tensions with Japan specifically for the ease of railroad transportation. The idea was to build the subs at the existing shipyards in the Baltic and Black Sea and then transport them quickly and cheaply by a railway car to the Far East without disassembling them or requiring a perilous and lengthy sea voyage. Not only Malyutka met this requirement, but also it was the first sub ever to have its entire hull electrically welded as opposed to riveted.

What Malyutka gained in overland mobility was however at the expense of displacement and combat worthiness. The first 50 subs of the class, those of VI and VI-Bis series, fared extremely poorly against Germany and its allies during WW2, not sinking a single enemy ship (based on wartime Axis archival records, despite Soviet claims). The M-102, built in 1940 at the Factory #196 in Leningrad, belonged to the new and substantially improved XII series. It was 20% longer and 10% wider than the initial series while retaining the ability of being transported by rail. The XII series sub displaced 256 tons when loaded - 40% larger than the earlier Malyutkas - and had a more powerful diesel engine. Nevertheless, it was still a very tiny vessel with huge disadvantages against modern warships of the Kriegsmarine.

Like the other Malyutkas of the Baltic Fleet, the M-102 never sunk an enemy vessel, although it came close on at least one occasion on 13 October 1943, when it fired two torpedoes at the German minesweeper M-30 in Narva Bay but missed. The sub had a combat service history chockfull of mishaps and near disasters, including running aground three times and colliding with a Soviet transport ship Pyatiletka on 20 October 1941. On 7 July 1943, she came under an air attack while sailing on surface in the Gulf of Finland and received severe damage from bomb fragments, with both her skipper and first mate killed. On two occasions, on 3 October 1943 and 11 September 1944, the sub was damaged by sea mines. Unlike most other subs of its class however, she almost miraculously survived and each time was able to return to combat after repairs. Against all odds, the M-102 completed nine combat patrols and was still in active service at the end of the war. The sub got removed from combat duty only in November 1945 but was retained as a training vessel at the Kirov Naval School; even after being decommissioned in 1953, it was still used for a while for scuba diver training.

Private Seaman Biryulin proved a worthy member of the M-102 crew throughout her wartime ordeals. According to the award commendation for the Nakhimov Medal submitted by the sub's commander Nikolay Leskovoy on 17 January 1945, Biryulin constantly exhibited bravery and endurance in combat, and "honorably fulfilled his obligation to the motherland". In stormy weather, he steadfastly carried out his duty of a helmsman despite experiencing "incredible torments of sea sickness" as the small boat was tossed about by the waves. Biryulin also made sure that the equipment in his care always functioned flawlessly. He thus ensured that the submarine was able to complete her assignments. The commendation particularly emphasized Biryulin's excellent service during the combat patrol in the mouth of the Gulf of Finland from 30 December 1944 - 13 January 1945. On 16 February 1945, Biryulin was awarded with the Nakhimov Medal by the order of the Commander of the Submarine Brigade, Baltic Fleet.

On 21 July 1945, Biryulin was recommended for his second decoration, the Ushakov Medal, for his outstanding performance during M-102's last combat patrols of the war in the winter of 1944-45. Once again, the submarine commander's recommendation mentioned Biryulin's fortitude in remaining at his post despite suffering from severe sea sickness. It also mentioned that his flawless execution of commander's orders allowed the sub to evade the attacks of enemy speedboats - apparently referring to the incident in the pre-dawn hours of 27 February, when the M-102 was counterattacked and depth-charged by a group of German speedboats near the city of Windau (now Ventspils, Latvia) and barely made her escape. It is interesting to see that the Ushakov Medal (#4157) was officially bestowed upon Biryulin on 20 July 1945 - i.e. a day before the "post-factum" award recommendation, as it sometimes happened during the war. Biryulin was discharged from the active duty in May 1948 upon completing six years of uninterrupted naval service. Beside the Nakhimov and Ushakov Medals, he was awarded with Medals for the Defense of Leningrad and Victory over Germany, as well as the 1985 "jubilee" issue of the Order of the Patriotic War.

Research Materials: b/w photocopy of the award commendations for the Nakhimov and Ushakov Medals. A very detailed information about the M-102 can be found on a number of Russian-language websites, in particular <http://www.sovboat.ru/ship/m102.php3>

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		гв. к/ф	К-р БШЛ КБФ	№ /н	16.04.45
1060	Мосьянов Борис Михайлович	ст 1 ст.	К. КЛФ КБФ	№ 30н	13.08.44
1061	Агаев Джабур Муддилович	ст. к/ф	К-р БПЛ	№ 4н	16.02.45
1062	Бирюлин Александр Михайлович	к/ф	К-р БПЛ	№ 4н	16.02.45
1063	Горбунов Виктор Захарович 13.04.45 г.	ст 2 ст.	К-р БШК КБФ	№ 11	12.08.44
1064	Михайлов Николай Гаврилович	ст. к/ф	К-р БПЛ КБФ	№ 12н	20.07.45
1065	Середенко Николай Дмитриевич	ст. к/ф	К-р БПЛ	№ 12н	20.07.45
1066	Бельялин Николай Михайлович	ст. к/ф	К-р БПЛ	№ 12н	20.07.45

Награжден медалью "НАХИМОВА"  
приказом командира ПЛ КВ № 4/н от 16.02.45г.

# НАГРАДНОЙ ЛИСТ

На рулевого Подполковника Лейки "М-102" Бригады Подлодок КВВ  
(должность, наименование войсковой части, соединения, учреждения или заведения)  
Краснофлота БИРВЛИНА Александра Михайловича  
(военное звание, фамилия, имя и отчество)

Медаль "НАХИМОВА"  
(наименование награды)

1. Год рождения 1922 г. 2. Национальность Русский
3. Социальное положение Рабочий 4. Партийность Член ВЛКСМ
5. С какого года в РККА или РКВМФ 1942 г.
6. Участие в гражданской войне не участвовал
7. Ранения и контузии не имеет
8. Представлялся ли ранее к награде, когда и за что не представлялся

9. Какие имеет поощрения и награды и за что Медаль "За Службу Ленинграда" 1942.

10. Служба в белой или других буржуазных армиях и пребывание в плену не служил, в плену не был.

11. Постоянный адрес \_\_\_\_\_

I. Краткое, конкретное изложение личного боевого подвига или заслуг  
(составляется в штабе войсковой части, соединения, учреждения или заведения)

Будучи в боевом походе III против немико-фашистских захватчиков показал себя смелым, мужественным и выносливым морисом с честью выполнявшим долг перед Родиной.

В сильные зимние погоды будучи подвержен кашлю он исполняет непростое дело морской боевой, по пометры на это он ни разу не покинул своего боевого поста и продолжал мужественно бороться со смертью и вестя III по только зашином курсу тем самым обеспечивал успешное выполнение задания командования III. В сложных условиях его материальная часть работала безотказно.

За отвагу, мужество и выносливость в боевом походе III с Э.12.44 г. по 19.01.45 г. Т.БИРВЛИН достоин получить следующей награды медалью "НАХИМОВА".

КОМАНДИР ПОДЛОДНОЙ ЛЕЙКИ "М-102"  
Капитан-лейтенант: ЛЕЖЕВОЙ /

"17" января 1945 г.

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