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Order of the Red Banner, Type 2, Variation 3, Sub-variation 1, #41819, awarded on 21 September 1942 to Guards Battalion Commissar Ivan Zvyagintsev (Иван Федорович Звягинцев), Military Commissar of the 76th Guards Rifle Regiment, 27th Guards Rifle Division, 4th Tank Army, Stalingrad Front.

Silver gilt, enamels. Measures 40.0 mm in height (from the top of the flag to the bottom of the wreath), 35.9 mm in width; weighs 22.5 g. According to Durov and Strekalov, this piece was manufactured in 1942 at the Krasnokamsk Mint /See The Order of the Red Banner V. Durov, N. Strekalov, p. 126./

In fine condition, very respectable for a Type 2 screw back. The enamel on the banner in particular is much better preserved than usual. It has a single, relatively small chip at its lower edge immediately above the hammer & sickle emblem but no other penetrating chips or repairs. It also shows surface flaking, mostly along the borders, but still retains a nice luster. The red enamel is missing on the center star, while the enamel on the red scroll shows a few chips and extensive surface flaking throughout. The white enamel on the background is essentially perfect having only microscopic flakes in the center medallion that are completely unnoticeable to the naked eye, no other wear.

The details of the torch, flagpole and wreath are well-preserved and crisp; a very good amount of the original fire gilt finish is clearly visible on all parts of the obverse. On the reverse, there are some scratches near the top possibly indicating that a makeshift suspension loop was once added to it (probably with an application of a low-melting point solder) to comply with the post-1943 regulations and later removed. The order however has not been fully converted to suspension and retains its original screw post measuring approx. 11 mm long. A characteristic "spillover" gilt is present along most of the edge on the reverse. An original WW2 era screw plate in silver is included. Overall, this piece is an imperfect but essentially unaltered and attractive example showing a lot of character.

Ivan Zvyaginstev was born in 1907 in the city of Kursk. In 1930, he joined the Communist Party and a year later, the Red Army, eventually becoming a military political officer. He took part in the Patriotic War from its first days in June 1941, initially serving with the Kalinin Front (army group). As of August 1942, Zvyagintsev had the rank of Guards Battalion Commissar - an equivalent of army major - and position of Military Commissar of the 76th Guards Rifle Regiment, 27th Guards Rifle Division. The latter was formed in May 1942 from an illustrious Guards brigade which had begun as a naval rifle brigade and greatly distinguished itself at Demyansk and Kholm. Initially, the division was kept in reserves of the Kalinin Front. In August 1942, about a month and a half after the beginning of the German Operation Blau, it was rushed south to join the new, not yet fully assembled 4th Tank Army of the Stalingrad Front. At that point, Rostov and Voronezh had fallen, Soviet positions west of the Don River were crumbling, and Stalin had just issued his infamous Order No. 227 "Not a Step Back".

Deployed in the great eastward bend of the Don west of Kalach, 4th Tank Army vigorously counterattacked the German 16th Panzer Division in late July but was thrown back - due in large part to relentless attacks by Stuka dive-bombers - losing more than half of its tanks and large number of troops within days. Nevertheless, the army and other units of the Stalingrad Front had evaded a major encirclement and brought the Paulus' Sixth Army to a temporary standstill, retaining the all-important Kalach bridgehead on the most direct route to Stalingrad. By mid- August however, all of the 4th Tank Army units were in full retreat or encircled, almost all of its tanks were gone, and it was nearly out of ammunition and a tank army in name only. On 18 August, Zvyagintsev's 27th Guards Rifle Division along with several other division hitherto kept in Stavka (High Command) reserves was ordered by the Commander of the Stalingrad Front Eremenko to buttress, perhaps belatedly, the nearly annihilated 4th Tank Army. Kalanch and the rest of the Don River line had by then been lost, with an exception of two small bridgeheads at Serafimovich and Kremenskaya (neglected by the Germans, they would play a key role in the Soviet counteroffensive in November). On the following day, with the western bank of the Don mostly cleared, Paulus declared the beginning of the drive to the Volga and Stalingrad, the latter now recognized by the German high command as the final objective of the summer campaign.

Despite the dire situation, Zvyagintsev's regiment and the rest of the 27th Guards Rifle immediately made their presence known. On 22-24 August, his unit was engaged in a fierce battle with some of the advance elements of the German LI Army Corps, Sixth Army that had crossed the Don near Vertyachii. Desperately trying to contain the rapidly expanding German bridgehead on the eastern bank, Zvyagintsev and his men stopped the initial enemy assault on the village of Pan'shino few miles north of Vertyachiy. According to the subsequent award commendation, the 76th Guards Rifle Regiment with its own counterattacks repelled four enemy attacks during the following days, killing 1200 enemy soldiers, burning down two tanks, and destroying one armored personnel carrier and three other motor vehicles. Throughout the action, Commissar Zvyagintsev was leading from the front, inspiring soldiers by his personal example to "fight the marauding German army".

Although the losses inflicted on the Germans at Pan'shino seem greatly exaggerated, the German OKW noted in its operation summary for 24 August fierce Soviet counterattacks supported by tanks in the area east of the town of Kislov, some five miles southwest of Pan'shino. These came as a part of the all-out attempt of Eremenko's Stalingrad Front to strike the northern flank of the German corridor unfolding towards Stalingrad. According to the German sources however, all the Soviet attacks there were repulsed. The 4th Tank Army and 62nd Army continued their attempts to disrupt the positions of the German VIII and LI Army Corps in the area and wipe out the crossing at Vertyachiy for a few more days, albeit in a piecemeal fashion. Nevertheless, even though the Soviet efforts there ultimately failed, they forced Paulus to turn his attention to the exposed northern flank of the Sixth Army and reallocate its already scarce manpower and materiel from the eastward push to Stalingrad.

On 31 August 1942, even as the Soviet situation in Stalingrad was getting worse by the hour, Guards Battalion Commissar Zvyagintsev was recommended for the Order of the Red Banner by his division's military and political commanders. Two weeks later, the recommendation was approved by Commander of the 4th Tanks Army Guards Maj. General Kryuchenkin and his two political commissars. The high decoration bestowed by a general order of the Stalingrad Front on 27 September was among the earliest such awards specifically for the Battle of Stalingrad. It was issued at the time when the battle was going very badly for the Soviets, long before the November counteroffensive. Almost needless to say, a vast majority of Soviet decorations for Stalingrad were issued during the later stages of the battle or after its victorious conclusion in 1943. It is noteworthy that Zvyagintsev's award commendation was one of the last submitted and approved jointly by military commanders and commissars: the dual command in the Red Army was abolished shortly thereafter, in October 1942, and although commissars remained as political officers, they were henceforth subordinated to the unit commanders.

After Stalingrad, Zvyagintsev continued to serve with distinction as Deputy Commander and Chief Political Officer of the 76th Guards Regiment. In December 1943, he was awarded with the Order of the Red Star (#393008) earned in the previous September-October during the liberation of the Donbas and the city of Zaporozhye (now Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine).

In June 1944, Zvyagintsev was appointed Deputy Commander of the Political Department of the 20th Guards Rifle Corps, 4th Guards Army of the 2nd Ukrainian and later, 3rd Ukrainian Front. In this capacity, he showed great leadership and skills in the Yasi-Kishinev offensive, forced crossing of the Danube, siege of Budapest, and capture of Vienna. He was particularly effective in ensuring that infantrymen of his unit would be unafraid of German panzer assaults and personally curated the creation of specialized tank destroyer detachments. In July 1945, he was awarded for these accomplishments with his final decoration of the war, the Order of the Patriotic War, 1st cl. (#239475).

After the war, Zvyagintsev continued to serve as Deputy Chief of the Political Department with the 20th Rifle Corps, then a part of Kiev Military District, until retiring in late 1946 with the rank of Guards Colonel.

Research Materials: photocopy of the award record card and award commendations for the Order of the Red Banner, Order of the Red Star, and Order of the Patriotic War, 1st cl.

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Учетная карточка

Орденская книжка
Удостоверение

№ 203796

1. Фамилия Звезинцев
2. Имя и отчество Иван Федорович
3. Военное звание Св. подполковник
4. Пол Мужской
5. Год рождения 1907
6. Место рождения г. Курск
7. Партийность (с какого года) чл. ВКП(б) 1930
8. Образование Среднее
9. Национальность Русский
10. С какого года в Красной Армии с 1-1931г.
11. Место службы (наименование части) и занимаемая должность в момент награждения 426. Бригады 2026. СК - Зам. нач. политзащиты корпуса.
12. Место службы и должность в настоящее время КВО, 2026. СК - Зам. нач. ПО корпуса.
13. Домашний адрес награжденного г. Муром, ул. Чапаева 31.

(См. п/05.)



