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Stalingrad did not surrender. General Paulus, in charge of the German offensive, settled in for a long winter in the city. Soviet commanders prepared to hold out.

As winter approached, the German troops were at a potential disadvantage. No one liked the idea of spending Christmas with few supplies in a pitiful camp near the city of Stalingrad. The Germans were ill-equipped. Letters that survive reflect the soldiers' despair. Most German troops had expected to be long gone before the brutal Russian winter set in.

But German soldiers were better off than citizens still alive in the city. Starving women, children and soldiers endured endless agonies. Lice-laden, frost-bitten people gave in to cannibalism as frozen corpses mounted while food supplies dwindled.

Despite the ghastly scene of human despair, the people of Stalingrad held on. Soviet snipers systematically targeted German officers. Using leveled buildings as hiding spots, they took aim with their Russian Moisin-Nagant 91/30 sniper rifles. The more "kills" they achieved, the greater their fame.

Vasily Zaitsev, the most famous sniper of all, had arrived in Stalingrad with the 284th Division on September 20, 1942. Using the skills he had learned as a boy, growing up in the Siberian taiga, he inspired his comrades to stand firm and to eliminate one enemy at a time.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-SIEGE-OF-STALINGRAD-Enemy-At-The-Gates>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-SIEGE-OF-STALINGRAD-Enemy-At-The-Gates>

Media Stream



General Paulus Photo

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Winter in Stalingrad

Image online, courtesy the 1-48combat.com website.

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Commander Chuikov

Image online, courtesy the stalingrad.galeon.com website.

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Soviet Soldier Poster

Image, described above, online via Soviet-era poster website (in Russian).

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Vasily Zaitsev Photograph

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