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The taiga (forest) is dense in the foothills of the Ural Mountains. This image, of a photo by Sergei Sekachev, reveals a beautiful view of such a forest. Online via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Vasily Zaitsev, known as Vasha to family and friends, grew up in the foothills of the [Ural Mountains](#). His grandfather taught him to hunt in the taiga, the nearby Siberian forest.

When he became a man, Zaitsev remembered what his grandfather had taught him:

The man of the forest is without fear.

Soviet commanders also remembered what they had learned two years before: Heavy casualties could be inflicted by one trained sniper.

On the receiving end of such an experience, the Red Army lost at least 500 men when [Simo Hayha](#), a Finnish farmer, fought Russian invaders during the Winter War of 1939/40. Thereafter, the Soviet command placed heavy emphasis on the use of snipers. [Vasily](#), with his natural ability, was perfect for the job.

Used to waiting hours to take his best shot in the taiga, Vasha was patient. He had a famous saying:

*Await the right moment for one,
and only one, well-aimed shot.*

Legend has it that for his 242 Stalingrad "kills," Vasily took only 243 shots.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/VASILY-ZAITSEV-Stalingrad-Deadly-Battle-of-WWII>

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Media Stream



Vasily Zaitsev - Famous Soviet Sniper

Photo, described above, by *Ria Novosti*; online via [The Telegraph](#).

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