

ARMY OF ONE

We know the price and significance of the Great Victory, we are proud of it and revere veterans' services to the Motherland and future generations. This year Kazakhstan just like many other states celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory over fascism. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev himself started a series of celebration events: on the eve of 2015 akims of all regions congratulated veterans in behalf of the President of the country. From time to time in Kazakhstan one can hear an opinion that our country had no concern with the past war; there were not battles in our territory anyway. Having organized the event, the head of state made it clear how we should take the feat of our fathers and grandfathers who left for the front in those fatal forties in order to fight for our future, for native Kazakhstan.

Our Republic entered the Great Patriotic War as a member of the USSR, possessing industrial facilities and large natural resources. In two decades of peaceful development unemployment and class exploitation under colonial and national oppression, illiteracy of population and deprivation of women's rights had been eradicated. At the same time negative factors of those decades were in effect as well: famine and terror, which claimed lives of almost half of Kazakh population, start of the Great steppe transformation into a zone of repressed nations' resettlement. In accordance with work orders of Ministry of Defense of the USSR Kazakh SSR sent about 1 million 200 thousand volunteers to the front, 700 thousand people to construction battalions and work strings of the Labor Army; 200 thousand middle aged Kazakhs on a par with mobilized special settlers and captives were constructing defense facilities in Ural, Siberia, and Far East. By the beginning of the war about 178 thousand people had been doing military service in regular units of the Soviet Armed Forces. Thus, in total 1 million 374 thousand Kazakhstanis were called to active duty. Researching into military history of Kazakhstan, in particular into participation of Kazakh national military formations, which had been formed and sent to the front from Kazakhstan, we happened to work closely with multiple organizations from different corners of our country. Thanks to collaboration with regional departments for archives and documentation of several Kazakhstan regions (for instance, West, East, and South Kazakhstan) we were able to adjust data and find relatives, who, after 70 years, learned the fate of their grandfathers. The only regional department which has not overcome its imperceptions of Kazakh military formations was the Akmolinsk department, in spite of the fact that more than two thousand and five hundred Kazakhs from present-day Akmolinsk region (at the time it was Akmolinsk and Kokshetau regions) were called up to serve in the 106th national cavalry division. During the last 2014 with persistence on the verge of absurdity department informed everyone, including administration of Akmolinsk region and even Institute of History and Ethnology named after Ch.Valikhanov, that "taking into consideration little volume of available materials we believe that there is no necessity in sending regional archive's specialists to Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense in

Podolsk, Moskovsky region of the Russian Federation. Work on revision of the 106th cavalry division lists is not planned. Above mentioned work will possibly be considered and planned for 2016-2017". In the year of preparations for the 65th anniversary of Victory this region demonstrated «proper» attitude to the history of war. Absolute ignorance and reluctance to know history of native country astonished even experienced servicemen. Having made a report to Committee of information and archives of the Ministry of Culture on creation of funds' collection dedicated to this division in 2013, during the last year department kept persisting: there is no such collection of files. The majority of soldiers at the 100th separate Kazakh shooting brigade, which had been formed in Alma-Ata were men from Almaty region. Only 28 soldiers were from Pavlodar region, nevertheless several years ago workers of Pavlodar regional archive sent discovered a great number of archival documents concerning this brigade and their fellow-townsmen who served in that brigade. Having verified archival sources, they managed to find out names of Pavlodar residents who served in other units, including deceased and reported missing. Thanks to great and rich collection of documents of the Great Patriotic war period regional archive created multimedia guide, (which was made available on the archive's web-site); anyone searching for his relative has access to it. A man with cannon against Heinz Guderian's 4th armor division. Even one man in the field is a warrior. At the age of 19 Kolya Sirotinin got a chance to dispute a proverb "one man in the field is no warrior". He did not become a legend of the Great Patriotic War as Alexander Matrossov or Nikolay Gastello, but he turned into a kind of Brest fortress for Germans. Lone warrior had held his fort against armor division for more than 2 hours. On July 17, 1941 Heinz Guderian's 4th armor division was breaking through to Belorussian town Krichev; Guderian was one the most talented generals-tankmen. The 13th Soviet Army units were retreating. The only one who did not abandon his position was a 19 years old gunlayer Kolya Sirotinin from Orel, who fought a column of German tanks. He was a mere boy, not tall, quiet and frail. A battery commander said. "Two men with cannon will stay here". Senior sergeant Nikolay Sirotinin volunteered, the second man who joined him was the commander himself. In the morning of July 17 a column of German tanks appeared on the road. Besides 59 tanks there were dozens of motorcyclists and infantry. Reconnaissance reported that the road was open. Natalya Morozova, director of Krichev local history museum says, "Kolya took a position on a hill right in kolkhoz field. Cannon sank in high rye, but he could clearly see the road and bridge across the river Dobrost. That gun crew required three men, but Kolya was alone there. When command tank entered the bridge, Kolya punctured it with the first shot. His second shot set armoured carrier on fire. Having performed his mission, Kolya had to retreat and join his unit, but there were 60 more cannon shots left and he decided to stay! Two tanks made an attempt to drag the command tank off the bridge, but they got punctured as well. Armoured carrier tried to cross the river Dobrost, but it stuck in boggy shore, where another shot found it. Kolya was making shots, puncturing tanks one by one. Eleven tanks and six armoured carriers were set on fire. When fascists realized that they could not capture Russian gunners, they surrounded Sirotinin's position and opened

drumfire. Cannon fell silent. Germans could not believe that only one gunner had been fighting against them. Multiple shot holes covered shield of the cannon, Nikolay's helmet was pierced as well.

He is Russian. Is such admiration required? Oberleutnant of the 4th armor division Henfeld wrote in his diary "July 17, 1941. Sokolnichi village near town Krichev. In the evening we buried unknown Russian soldier. He, by himself, had been shooting a tank column and infantry from his cannon for a long time and finally died. Everybody was amazed at his bravery... Oberst (colonel) said, standing at the grave, that if all soldiers could fight like this Russian did, they would conquer the whole world. They performed three-volley salute. He is Russian, is such admiration required?" Verzhbitskaya, local resident, recalls, "In the second half of the day Germans gathered by the place where cannon was positioned. They made us, local residents, come there as well; because I knew German language main German officer ordered me to translate. He said that this is how soldier should protect his Fatherland. Then he took a locket with name and address from our killed soldier's shirt. Main German told me that I should write a letter to the soldier's relatives so that his mother would know that her son was a hero and how he died. I was frightened and refused to do it. Then young German officer, who was standing inside the grave, covering Sirotinin's body with Soviet martial cloak, snatched a scrap of paper and locket from my hand and said something rude. Long after the funeral Hitlerites stood near cannon and grave in the midst of kolkhoz field, counting shots and hits not without admiration". His family learned about feat of their Nikolay only in 1958 from publication in "Ogonek" magazine. Material, describing Nikolay Sirotinin's last fight, was sent from Ministry of Defense archive, in its turn it was sent to the Ministry by local historian of Krichev. Today there is not Kolya's grave in Sokolnichi village. Three years after the war his remains were relocated to common grave. 19 years after his feat he was posthumously awarded first class Order of the Patriotic War. A monument to the hero was erected as well, but it was awkward with imitation cannon. History repeats itself. Just like many years ago, when tribute to the memory of Russian lad Nikolay Sirotitnin was not properly paid, today their own Motherland denies memory of Kazakh soldiers.

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