

My Russian friend with Kazakh soul

A person responsible for the start of my personal contacts with Russian searchers, or to be precise with Dmitry Zhuk, a leader of the Oleninsk district public organization “Military and historical searching centre “Orel”, was a Kazakh tankman from Karsakpay named Zhumash Rakhmetov, who died during the years of the Great Patriotic war in Tver region.

Senior lieutenant of the Guards graduated from Syzran armored force school in 1941; he was a commander of a platoon of the 2nd company of the 1st tank battalion of the 1st Guards armored brigade of the 3rd mechanized corps; he was reckoned among ace armorers of the World War II. He destroyed more than 11 enemy’s tanks. Zh.Rakhmetov died in December 1942 in a battle for Vereista village in the Oleninsk district of Tver region.

The senior lieutenant of the Guards Zhumash Rakhmetovich Rakhmetov was posthumously nominated for the title Hero of the Soviet Union for exceptional bravery and heroism, brilliant performance of the command’s orders.

Unfortunately, even campaign in Karaganda region mass media has not assisted in finding the tank man’ relatives.

Dmitry Zhuk graduated from conductor’s faculty of the Gnesins College; he was a really talented flutist. He had served in the Presidential Orchestra in Moscow, and after service he decided to stay in the capital. One day he made a decision to return to Olenino, his small motherland, with a shovel and wartime maps in his hands. He had a God-given talent of searching.

Anytime we turned to him for help, asking to find data of Kazakhs from our rifle brigades, he would give every possible assistance even in almost hopeless cases.

The history of searching brigades’ contacts with Kazakhstan started in 2005, the year when a pendant of Akhmedzhan Nakeyev, born in Karaganda region, who had been reported missing, was found in the environs of Molodoy Tud. To find the soldier’s relatives Dmitry Zhuk went to Moscow, to Kazakhstan Embassy in Russia; he was received by cultural attaché. In spring 2006 he received a response that a younger brother of the deceased warrior was found in Karaganda region, and that he was willing to visit burial ceremony. The ceremony took place on 5 May, 2006.

At the time, a memorial in Molodoy Tud was not a memorial as such; it was just one of common graves of the Oleninsk district. Choice of place of memorial was not random, as it possessed some advantages over other common graves, such as big territory, a good access lane during all seasons of the year (asphalt road) and administration, club, and school situated nearby, which is exceptionally important for organizing burial ceremonies.

On the eve of 9 May, 2010 common graves were renovated, new marble plates with names of buried heroes were installed, a square was tiled and the territory was fenced. Same preparations were carried out in 29 common graves and three separate soldier’s graves.

Before 2010, 250 soldiers of the Great War had been buried in Molodoy Tud, in 2010 162 warriors (soldiers and officers) more from the 100th and 101st rifle brigades were buried there. It was the result of the Oleninsk searching brigade members’ laborious work. Dmitry Zhuk was decorated with “Dostyk” order, i.e. state award of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

As it appears from materials of RF Ministry of defense Central archive, our soldiers had been taking part in combat operations in places located 60 kilometres from Rzhev. Casualties were tremendous.

Remains of our warriors repose in two common graves in Molodoy Tud and one common grave in Kurkino (Linkovo).

The head of “Orel” searching brigade Dmitry Zhuk raised a question about putting names of deceased Kazakhstani soldiers on common graves lists. He addresses a request to Kazakhstan embassy in Russia to correct names for their right spelling; lists of casualties had to be sent two times because of their loss.

«The Victory Train”. December 2010

Veterans from several Kazakhstan cities were gathered in “The Victory Train” and carried to Rzhev. The event was initiated by Kazakhstan embassy in Russia and was conducted under “Nur Otan” and “Edinaya Rossiya” parties’ auspices.

On 12 December, 2010 a memorial to Kazakhstani warriors, who had perished in Oleninsk district, was unveiled in Rzhev.

The memorial itself was built by President of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev’s order within the framework commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the Great Victory. Thanks to the contribution made by Aktyubinsk region, the memorial turned out grandiose. Embassy employees did a “wonderful” job and enlarged the list of names manifold, they copied out names of all soldiers conscripted into Kazakh rifle brigades (including wounded, alive and perished at other fronts of the Great Patriotic war).

Nobody recollected Dmitry Zhuk and his searching brigade, without whose work our country would have never learned the fate of Kazakh soldiers. Neither searchers nor head of the Oleninsk district were invited to the memorial’s opening ceremony.

Myths about brigades

According to existing myths, casualties of the 100th and 101st brigades amounted to 10000 people, while other sources state that the number of deceased made 13000 people, although it is known that the number of wounded soldiers from both brigades amounted to 4531 people, and it is not hard to see from commendation lists, that not all the wounded died and that many of them lived to see the end of the war. And those brigades had never fought in the environs of Rzhev while relatives of the deceased soldiers from Kazakhstan keep visiting places of the bloodiest battles in the Oleninsk (not Rzhev) district of the Tver region.

For the present, the only tribute to the memory of deceased soldiers is a marble plate on the bank of the river Tudovka, erected by local sculptor, and another one in the Twenty-eight Panfilov’s Guardsmen Park in Almaty.

On the eve of 2014 Dmitry Zhuk passed away, but the memory preserves his unquenchable responsibility before those who have fallen. It is doubtless that memory about my Russian friend with Kazakh soul is enshrined in hearts of those whom he had given hope to live with the memory.

Dina IGSATOVA,

