

ARMED FORCES

'KRASNAYA ZVEZDA' COVERAGE OF TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

Private Profiled

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[Report by Lt Col V. Skrizhalin: "In the Spurs of the Hindu Kush"--first three paragraphs are reader's letter]

[Text] Dear editorial office:

My son Igor is fulfilling his international duty in the DRA. We are not short of letters from him: they arrive frequently. But they are very brief: he says he is alive and well. But what mother does not want to know more, and in more detail, about how her son is living and service? If you can describe this I will be very grateful and thankful.

[signed] A. I. Kolyada, Dubinka Village, Sumy Oblast.

Limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan [no date given]--On arriving in Afghanistan I joined a motorized regiment where the final assessment was coming to an end at the time. Walking between the rows of tents, I met a group of officers discussing something loudly. A thickset lieutenant colonel of medium height (I learned later it was Nikolay Petrovich Leonov) was saying heatedly:

"I could see the boy was shooting well. I decided to make the exercise conditions more complicated to check the soldier thoroughly: I ordered him to fire not at an area but at a pinpoint target. And what happened? He did well, he straddled the target...!"

My desire as a journalist to let slip nothing which came within my field of vision made me ask the lieutenant colonel:

"Do you remember that boy's surname?"

"Just a minute...", he leafed through his wellworn notebook. "Here we are: Pvt Kolyada Igor Nikolayevich."

analyzed and generalized in this fundamental work indicates convincingly that socialism--an advanced social system corresponding to the innermost aspirations of the people's masses--cannot be crushed by force, just as the law-governed development of human society as a whole cannot be halted.

The results and lessons of the past war so thoroughly researched in the concluding volume under review confirm Lenin's conclusion that socialism brings peace to the peoples. The socialist countries' defense might is the guarantee of their ongoing development and the guarantee of peace on earth. Herein lies the meaning of the historic purpose of the socialist states' defense coalition--the Warsaw Pact, which reliably defends its participants' revolutionary achievements.

The war's lessons are important both from a philosophical and methodological viewpoint. The military reader will find in the 12-volume "History of World War II" many arguments and recommendations which can be profitably used both for a deeper knowledge of the past and for practical activity in contemporary conditions in the interests of the struggle against the threat of a new war.

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That was a surprise! I had brought your letter with me from Moscow, Anna Ivanovna, anticipating how hard it would be to fulfill your request. And on my first trip to the unit I had met with instant success.

Of course, it was by chance that the officers had started to talk about Private Kolyada at precisely the moment I was passing by. But something else was natural. Had Private Kolyada not been a real master of martial matters, had he not shown his mettle in such a way that he was mentioned even some time after he had performed the fire exercise, then of course the officers would have been talking about other men at that time.

Of course, Anna Ivanovna, your son Igor's service is hard. His gun alone (and it is a very formidable gun) weighs several kilograms. When the servicemen go into the mountains on exercise then at least two water bottles, dry rations for several days, ammunition, a change of underwear and warm clothing are added.

In the evening we were sitting in the officer's tent and the battalion commander, Maj V. Usmanov, glancing at a guitar, remarked:

"Each of us should also have his own six tightly strung, tuned strings."

And he began to list them: combat skill, coolness, the ability to react instantly to a change in the situation, willpower, daring and readiness to render comradely mutual aid. I counted them mentally: exactly right--six.

Private Kolyada has these qualities. His family, school, the Komsomol and technical college gave him a great deal. The formation of his character has continued here, in the army.

His former platoon commander (he now commands a company), Snr Lt V. Godyna, who has been awarded two orders of the Red Star, described the following episode to me. On a march the situation became complicated, so that the officer had no opportunity to lead his subordinates directly. And only the initiative displayed by Private Kolyada, his self-possession and military skill helped to fulfill their set task successfully. So, Anna Ivanovna, you can be proud of your son.

And another characteristic episode. Of course, you know that Igor, who graduated from construction workers' technical college, has a fine technical drawing ability. And visual agitation material had to be drawn in the Lenin room. True, the subunit was preparing for a mountain march but the commander decided that this time the exercise could do without Kolyada, he could remain in camp and draw the agitation material.

What need did Igor seemingly have to worry over his choice? The inaccessible, scorching cliffs, exhausting thirst, heavy equipment on his shoulders, kilometers of not simply difficult but also dangerous road. Or peaceful work at his desk, drawing paper, ink, ruler and paints....

And do you know what Igor said? "I cannot stay here, Comrade Major. I will be ashamed in front of my comrades. Better that I do the drawing when I return."

What are the conditions in which your son is living? In a tent, like everyone-- from soldier to regiment commander. You ask: But is it not cold in winter? No, it is not cold. First, winter here is mild. Second, a modern tent, although light, provides good-quality housing. A rubberized roof, a base of thick white cloth, a floor of planks, a stove. Neatly made beds. Clean bedlinen

How many songs have been sung about the field mail and how people wait for it. It would be superfluous to urge mothers to write to their sons more often. But I hope that these lines will be read not only by mothers and fathers but also by those from whom soldiers wait for letters particularly impatiently and about whom they try not to speak even at times when confidences are exchanged: a real feeling which is profoundly personal and intimate. Young women, write to the soldiers more often. Particularly here in Afghanistan.

These lines of mine should not be considered as a reply to you alone, esteemed Anna Ivanovna. In describing Private Kolyada I nonetheless had in mind not him alone. May every mother, every father whose son is serving in Afghanistan, imagine, in reading about Igor, that it is also the story of their own son. The only differences will be in the details.

The army is inconceivable without collectivism. And here the concepts of collectivism and the friendship of the peoples acquire a particularly vivid nature. Your son, Anna Ivanovna, is a Ukrainian. He has friends: the Belorussian Fedor Oseyuk, the Russian Andrey Studnev, the Tajik Tursunmakhmat Tursunov, the Uzbek Kamilzhon Khuzhakulov.... They, representatives of the great Soviet people, have a brother with whom they are linked by strong ties and the common cause of the defense of the gains of the April Revolution--the Afghan people.

Military Exercise

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[Dispatch by Sr Lt N. Ustyakin: "Drew Fire Onto Himself"]

[Text] Limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan--Tactical exercises were taking their normal course when a new situation arose: the "Bezmyannaya" height had been taken by the "enemy." The platoon commanded by Sr Lt I. Belotelov was ordered to storm it.

The platoon went to ground under heavy, aimed "enemy" fire and could not advance. Taking with him a machinegun and a serviceman, the commander moved forward and drew fire onto himself. He ordered the others to go round the height. The motorized riflemen carried out a quick movement to surround the "enemy" positions from the rear and took the height.

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