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Meeting with representatives of patriotic and youth public organisations

39–49 minutes





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At a meeting with representatives of patriotic and youth public organisations. Photo: Valery Sharifulin, TASS

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Friends, good afternoon.

It is a pleasure to be here on this special day, on Stalingrad soil, in the place where our people won a tremendous, heroic victory in every sense of the word.

I know that some of you have families that are directly connected with the Battle of Stalingrad, and some of you work on issues related to the Great Patriotic War, perpetuating the memory of our soldiers and officers who gave up their lives fighting for the Fatherland.

In fact, it is extremely important that you raise them directly, as they say, from the ground, based on real life, not on books, but on the specific facts that you deal with. I mean, of course, the work of the relevant groups, youth teams; and not just youth teams but people of different generations are involved. You raise them from the ground as evidence of the heroic deeds of our soldiers, officers, our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

I want to thank you for this. During our conversation today, I think, no, I am sure, we will have to thank everyone repeatedly for what you are doing in your area of work. But to start, let me once again congratulate you on the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Battle of Stalingrad. I would like to express my gratitude to you for your work today.

Please, let us begin.

Ruslan Khusainov: Good afternoon, Mr President.

First, we are very happy that you found the time to meet with us. We represent youth patriotic organisations and we understand military topics very clearly. Today, some people claim that military topics are less used in the patriotic education of the public. We, activists, would like to hear your opinion on this issue. This is the first question.

Second, it is very good that we are meeting in Volgograd, a city that pioneered such undertakings. We are referring not only to the beginning of the turning of the tide in the Great Patriotic War but also to our times because it was here in 2013 that you supported the initiative to create a uniform search movement.

My name is Ruslan and I am the head of *Guardsman*, a student search team at Volgograd Pedagogical University.

Vladimir Putin: Volgograd University? So you are a local, aren't you?

Ruslan Khusainov: I am.

Ten years have passed and we have done a lot during this time. Most importantly, we exhumed the remains of over 200,000 fighters and identified the names of over 12,000 officers and men. Our team now includes over 45,000 members of different ages, including school and student units.

We are also very proud that in 2018 you supported the initiative to launch the project *Without a Statute of Limitation*. This was actually initiated by searchers.

For us, 2023 is not just the year of the anniversary of the victories that decided the outcome of the entire war but it also includes our professional days: the 35th anniversary of the organised search movement and the 10th anniversary of our organisation.

In this context, we would like to invite you to attend one of our memory watches, entitled *The Western Front. Warsaw Motorway*. So, if you find the time, we will look forward to seeing you in the Kaluga Region in August.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

As you can see, I am already beginning to thank you for your work and I have already spoken about the significance of your work. This is practically a live broadcast from those who fought for our Motherland. You take it yourselves and give it to others – your age mates and the generations to come – the live history of the heroic feats of our people.

This is extremely important because a nation without memory does not have a future. Without knowing the past, it is impossible to have a future. We would lose everything we have, everything we cherish and everything that allows us to develop and move forward.

It is impossible to only live in the past – I have said this many times. This leads nowhere. It is impossible to live in the past. People must live today and with an eye to the future.

But there is no future without knowing the past, without understanding what land we live in and thanks to what people we live. If we do not respect ourselves and our ancestors, who made our life possible today, we will not be able to continue with the future of our country. This is quite obvious.

Thank you for inviting me. Of course, I will have a look at my schedule, but it is clearly necessary to hold such events and necessary to commemorate those who started the movement that you now dedicate a lot of your time to. It was

not me who launched the search movement. It happened even before 1988, when the Central Committee of the Komsomol adopted the appropriate decision and work began at the state level. It began sometime in the 1960s.

I believe Nikolai Orlov started it. He returned from the places he was taken to as teenager from the Novgorod Region, returned to his homeland. He worked, I think, somewhere on the railway, and while working there and visiting the places and forests nearby, he discovered, perhaps by chance, our fallen soldiers. First, he created a search movement for schoolchildren, and then organised this movement with workers of the Novgorod Region. This is how it all started.

Later, he and members of his family did this work, noble work, for almost all their lives. And the fact that it gradually gained such a broad scope, including through young people, is extremely important.

I will take a look, and I will be happy to come if possible.

Ruslan Khusainov: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Darya Vysokova: Mr President, my name is Darya Vysokova, and I am a member of the Russian reenactment movement.

Today my friends and I went to the Stalingrad Victory parade. Also, today I am wearing an extremely important and valuable thing for me: my great-grandmother's beret, which she wore during the entire war. This is a precious item.

Vladimir Putin: Is it this one? Is it true?

Darya Vysokova: Yes, the one I am wearing now.

Vladimir Putin: Is it your grandmother's military beret?

Darya Vysokova: Yes, my family has kept it since that time.

Also, two of my great-grandfathers left for the front. The eldest one died somewhere near Mamayev Kurgan, and the youngest spent his whole life looking for his brother's grave, but never found it. My father and I found the grave quite recently, just three years ago.

It is not just my story. I have a friend, Misha Potovoi, who also has a story.

Vladimir Putin: Dasha, I think you just said some very important words automatically. Did you notice it or not? Speaking of the history of your family and your great-grandfather, you said: this is not only my story; others have the same story. That is, you perceive the history of your family, the heroic history of your family as your own.

This is an extremely important component of all the work of the search movement and everything that our people do on their own initiative, and everything that the state does to ensure that the memory of the heroic past is preserved in our historical consciousness, in our historical memory. This is the result, in fact, that you said: "This is not only my story." You perceive it as your own.

This is extremely important. So good luck!

Darya Vysokova: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: And how did you and your father manage to find the grave of your ancestor?

Darya Vysokova: The search team helped us.

Vladimir Putin: Did you work in the archives?

Darya Vysokova: Yes, the *Heroic Deed of the People* website

helped.

My father had time to talk with my great-grandfather a bit. We learned many interesting stories from our great-grandfather.

Vladimir Putin: From his grandfather, right?

Darya Vysokova: Yes, from his grandfather, my great-grandfather.

Vladimir Putin: I see. You probably found it in the archives, didn't you?

Darya Vysokova: Yes, we searched the archives and found most of the information on the website.

Vladimir Putin: Great. It is very good that our military department and special services are now retrieving more documents from the archives and declassifying them. We will definitely continue to do this.

Darya Vysokova: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you, and all the best to your family.

Mikhail Tatarenko: Good afternoon, Mr President!

I would like to add something about Daria and Mikhail, on the work of information websites, such as the Book of Memory. They work at the level of gathering information about people like their ancestors.

In fact, if it was not for these sites, the work of re-enactors would be extremely difficult, and not just of re-enactors, but also the work of search teams.

I would like to thank the Russian Pobeda (Victory) Committee for making it possible to work with this site, because when there is memory, some consider it their own. Thanks to such websites, this memory becomes common heritage and a common victory.

We are grateful that you let us work in this area.

Vladimir Putin: I have already said that I will definitely encourage the work of our military department and special services that declassify a lot of documents, post them on relevant websites and give people an opportunity to work with them. There are a huge number of documents, they are countless, so we will definitely continue to do this.

As for the re-enactors, you do that, right?

Mikhail Tatarenko: Yes, exactly.

Vladimir Putin: You know, this is an extremely interesting thing, because when I look at something that you or your colleagues, your fellows do, of course, I can say without exaggeration that such work is better than any textbook, better than any piece of paper, because it creates a vivid picture of how our heroic ancestors lived, what they fought for and how they behaved.

But this work, of course, requires not just an inquisitive eye and patience, perseverance and hard work; it also requires talent. Everything I have seen so far in this sphere has shown a great deal of talent.

I would like to wish you success.

Mikhail Tatarenko: Thank you.

Anastasia Litvinova: Mr President, everyone has their own story related to Stalingrad, and so do I. My name is Nastya, I came from Donetsk. I am a young specialist, an oncologist.

My great-grandfather, Pyotr Litvinov, also participated in the Battle of Stalingrad, took part in the assault of Saur-Mogila and the crossing of the Dnieper River, liberated Sevastopol and Poland.

In autumn, I attended the opening of the newly rebuilt Saur-Mogila memorial, just like my great-grandfather did who attended its opening 55 years ago. Now that I am in Volgograd, I am overcome with incredible emotions, since visiting the places where our ancestors fought is an indescribable feeling. It gives me goosebumps, because there is no way to get so close to history by reading textbooks.

There is an idea to create theme-based historical routes for schools and families along the path of advancement of combat units through hero cities and cities of labour glory and include them in a programme for promoting domestic tourism. As far as I understand, this is very important today.

Also, I came here to participate in a meeting of Volunteers of Victory, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the participants in the Battle of Stalingrad. The meeting was a very sincere, pleasant, and warm experience, and the young people were widely receptive of it. I think it would be great to make a tradition of such meetings.

Mr President, in the autumn, you issued an instruction to begin preparations for marking the 80th anniversary of breaking the Nazi siege of Leningrad. There is one more idea in that regard – to hold a similar meeting of grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the participants in the Battle of Leningrad, and also include it in the action plan.

I think this format will unite young people based on common interests, common history, and their ancestors who fought during the Great Patriotic War.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Leningrad, or St Petersburg today, has a special place in my life and the life of my family. But you were

right when you said that when drafting domestic tourist routes – and domestic tourism is expanding at a fast pace in our country and will continue to expand, since we will pay increasingly more attention to it – it would make sense to design and implement the projects that you mentioned, such as routes to the places of military glory, or the events that we are celebrating today, such as the Battle of Stalingrad, the lifting of the Siege of Leningrad, and so on. There is also the Kursk Bulge and the Caucasus. We have cities which, working behind the enemy lines during the Great Patriotic War, gave all they had to ensure victory. This is also extremely interesting, because the way the industry and the people worked back then is a special chapter of valour in the history of our people.

You mentioned Leningrad which is home to the Kirov Plant. It was just four kilometres away from the front line. There were even occasions when the enemy entered the plant grounds. The workers then took up arms and went out to repel enemy attacks and then returned to the machines. Unbelievable, but true. That is the way it was.

Fifteen-year-old boys worked the machines and, in order not to waste time going to bomb shelters during air raids, they made a metal cabin and waited out the air raids in it, and then returned to their workplaces. Our entire nation behaved in that heroic manner during the war.

What you have just said about Saur-Mogila is also very important, because it is like a connection to today. And today, unfortunately, the defenders of Donbass gave their lives for this land, and not in vain. And the fact that this monument was restored is very good.

So I wish you every success in bringing your plans to reality

and will do my best to ensure that all of this is done. It must be done, and we will certainly discuss this with the Government. I am sure it will be implemented.

I have a question for you as a specialist: how is the oncology service organised in Donetsk today?

Anastasia Litvinova: We have a highly qualified oncology centre, the Grigory Bondar Republican Oncological Centre, with a lot of incredible specialists, my colleagues. They do not have much at their disposal and yet they can sometimes achieve things that our foreign colleagues are not capable of.

I believe that being in the oncology family, so to speak, because we communicate with other oncology centres throughout the Russian Federation, I understand that this is a tight-knit family: we help each other, and we always consult each other.

Vladimir Putin: You know that Russia has adopted a large and financially secure programme to fight cancer, develop centres, and purchase advanced equipment for them. I will definitely check whether our new territories, including the Donetsk Republic, are included in this work and whether sufficient funding is allocated for these purposes. I will definitely take a look.

Anastasia Litvinova: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: It is necessary to exchange experience with other Russian regions. For example, a large new oncology centre has opened just recently in Volgograd, as the governor reported earlier; I believe it has 800 beds and the most up-to-date equipment. Of course, qualification is needed. Despite the fact that there are wonderful doctors like you, you understand that this is a knowledge-intensive healthcare industry that requires constant 'nourishment' and information

exchange. I will definitely take a look at this.

In fact, I want to convey my gratitude to all medical workers of Donbass, in the Lugansk and the Donetsk republics, and other territories, because so many medical workers there work with full dedication. You know that, but not all of us know that it is incredible strain that requires both stamina and moral strength to work in medical institutions in these territories today.

The Government has just adopted a relevant decision at my request in order to financially support medical workers. I hope that this situation will come to an end.

Thank you all very much. My deepest gratitude.

Anastasia Litvinova: On behalf of Donetsk medical workers and all the residents of Donbass, I would also like to thank you. Thank you so much for your support and for the help you give us. It is incredible.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Go ahead, please.

Anatoly Sevostyanov: Mr President, let me take it from here. Anatoly Sevostyanov, deputy commander of the Novgorodets search unit, the Valley search expedition in memory of Nikolai Orlov, city of Veliky Novgorod.

Vladimir Putin: I was just thinking about him.

Alexander Sevostyanov: Yes.

I am from a search unit, and 80 percent of our members share the same last name. Our search unit is quite large, and it is a family outfit. The family is large, and most of the family members engage in search operations in order to perpetuate

the memory of soldiers who died in the Great Patriotic War.

My three brothers and a nephew went to the special military operation zone as volunteers. Like many Russian search unit members, they went to the front. We not only dig earth, but we also collect artefacts and create museums. The search units have created a large number of museums at their units, schools and universities.

However, we cannot forget modern history either. We must collect artefacts related to neo-Nazism and write the history of the special military operation as it unfolds. Our proposal is that we would like to see museums dedicated to the special military operation and heroes created in the regions.

As search unit members, we are ready to engage in this work and put up temporary expositions or exhibitions related to this issue based on the findings of our search teams. The only issue we might have is that there may be minor challenges with bringing items from the battle zone, but I think we can handle that.

What do you think about the idea of creating such museums? Should we go ahead with it?

Vladimir Putin: First, please send my best wishes to your family, primarily, your brothers, who are now on the front lines in the zone of the special military operation.

It must be said that, in this case, military activities are more than just heroic work, it is also hard work. Everyone who is there – I have mentioned it many times and I want to say it again – are true heroes. That is how we treat them now and will treat them in the future.

If this is so, then you are right: collecting artefacts

and information about the details of ongoing fighting by the troops who are defending the interests of our Motherland, is extremely important. Since people from all regions are fighting there, this should be done everywhere, so the idea is good.

The museums of that kind started being created soon after the Great Patriotic War broke out. People started collecting the materials that were later displayed and are still displayed in the collections of our historical museums, local history museums, and the like. So, this needs to be done, and it will be my pleasure to support you.

I want to thank you for the idea. One way or another, it is something that is happening anyway. The only thing that I want you to keep in mind is that this should be done in a safe and secure manner using caution, because we are talking about collecting materials and information practically in the combat zone. But they did it during the Great Patriotic War, meaning that it can be done today as well, but I just want you to use caution.

Anatoly Sevostyanov: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you for the idea.

Yelizaveta Dolgova: Mr President, my name is Yelizaveta Dolgova, I represent public organisations and the Movement of the First Russian Children's and Youth Movement. I actively participate in events; another one of my interests is Russian folk vocals, and I cover all this in my vlog.

Other students and I have one common problem: how should we deal with the flow of conflicting information that reaches us every day? This began even before the special military operation, when topics that distort the victory of the Red Army over Nazism got into the media space.

Those who work in the field of patriotism can fight this: we meet with veterans, eyewitnesses, children of the war, and, of course, every one of us, as was mentioned earlier, has their own story: our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers who fought and worked in the home front.

We have such materials on the Great Patriotic War: veterans have shaped and continue to share young people's worldview, but we do not have such materials on the special military operation, and we need eyewitnesses, people who saw everything with their own eyes. Of course, as activists we have already begun to work and we know the formats, such as, for example, Talking of What Matters school lessons.

But for us, children and young people, it is very important that the participants of the special military operation take part in events not just once, but regularly, systematically, so that they interact with young people in education, career guidance, and clubs. It would be very interesting both for them and for us. This is indeed a very important issue. And of course, I would like to receive honest and reliable information directly from participants in the special military operation.

Vladimir Putin: You know, the question you have raised may seem to be quite narrow, but it has a system-wide importance. There is such a thing as geopolitics. Russia is a large country, if you look at the European dimension today; I mean in terms of population, in terms of territory, it is the largest country in the world. And someone has always fought against it. And some said: how boring it is to live in the world when no one is fighting against Russia. This is not a joke, but a statement made by certain politicians of the past from Western countries. It has always been so. And this has always been accompanied by a struggle or a sphere of confrontation in information,

in the media. Let me repeat, it has always happened throughout our history.

Therefore, what is happening today around the special military operation is only an escalation of this struggle, which, I repeat, has always been waged. And it was always necessary to provide appropriate counteraction to this attempt to disorientate our people, our nation.

Almost always, the main target audience of this influence has been young people, who cannot remember what happened in the past, and they cannot, perhaps, appreciate the present. But this is possible for our enemy, to put it bluntly, only if we ourselves sit and do nothing.

Here are young people who are not sitting idly. And your work is extremely important, precisely in the context of what you have just said, Liza. This is the first thing. And I ask you all to continue this work, and all those who are involved in this work but not here at our meeting today.

Active interaction with people who directly defend the interests of the Russian state today, with participants in the special military operation, with our soldiers and officers, is a very important thing.

And in fact, we are now addressing this. We are asking our fighters to take part in various events, especially those on youth topics. But perhaps this is not enough, and you are right about this, and our soldiers need to be more actively involved in the events that you have mentioned. After all, they are fighting from all over Russia and may well take part in school education, participate in relevant activities through secondary and higher educational institutions, and take part in interregional or national events that you just mentioned. We will definitely do this. Thank

you for bringing this to our attention.

Do you sing in an ensemble or solo?

Yelizaveta Dolgova: I have been studying Russian folk singing since I was five; I go to the Mily Balakirev music school.

Vladimir Putin: Where is this school?

Yelizaveta Dolgova: In the Dzerzhinsky District in Volgograd. In fact, this is very important to me, because this is how I uphold traditions, and I am very glad that I can do this.

Vladimir Putin: And how many students go to this school?

Yelizaveta Dolgova: The folk singing section specifically has about 70 people.

Vladimir Putin: Great, and what is your teacher's name?

Yelizaveta Dolgova: Our teachers changed several times, but the teacher I studied with from a very young age is named Yelena.

Now I go to music school to support my vocals. I have already graduated, but I still continue to go to the group, because when I sing, my soul sings, and people really like it, people who are my age, too. I am glad that I can show that folk songs can also be very interesting and that you can listen to and enjoy them, too.

Vladimir Putin: Can I ask you to please stand up, turn to the camera, and let us say together: "Yelena, thank you very much. You are doing very important work."

Yelizaveta Dolgova: Yelena, thank you very much. You are doing very important work. We are very glad that Russian folk songs continue to live and that young people are still interested in them.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Yelizaveta Dolgova: Thank you.

Marina Dorokhina: Mr President, I would like to continue the topic of preserving historical memory. My name is Marina. I represent the Immortal Regiment of Russia.

Everyone's story matters to us: a personal story, Russia's story. Maybe that's why, being in a legendary place such as Stalingrad, looking at old photos, one involuntarily puts themselves in the place of those who fought here. I am as old as Lidia Litvyak was.

Vladimir Putin: You mean the pilot?

Marina Dorokhina: Yes, the legendary pilot. She and I are also similar because before the war, Lidia Litvyak was in Osoaviakhim [the Society for the Assistance of Defence, Aircraft and Chemical Construction], and I am a member of DOSAAF [Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy] of Russia.

As I said earlier, Lidia was an amazing pilot, was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union title posthumously. She made 89 sorties in the sky over Stalingrad, and she is in the Guinness Book of Records.

We know firsthand that today's young people go to the cinema and are interested in films telling the truth about the war. I recently found out that a feature film is being made about Lidia. The Cinema Foundation supported the project, and fundraising is also underway. We, the Immortal Regiment activists, made a contribution. I really want the film to be shown as soon as possible, because such films are necessary to preserve historical memory, films about fateful events (like Nuremberg,

the film you mentioned at a recent meeting in St Petersburg), and about individual heroes.

So maybe you could support this film, Litvyak, so it could be shown sooner?

Vladimir Putin: Who is filming it?

Marina Dorokhina: The Panfilov's 28 Men Film Studios, which earlier made the iconic film 28 Panfilov's Men.

Vladimir Putin: There is the Voenfilm company. Is that the one you mean?

Marina Dorokhina: I know that now, they call themselves Panfilov's 28 Men Film Studios.

Vladimir Putin: I think there is such a company.

Marina Dorokhina: It's directed by Andrei Shalopa.

Vladimir Putin: There is also a foundation. I will see how we can help them, support them, because good films about the Great Patriotic War, made by talented crews, are extremely important, because they have an emotional impact on the audience. This is not some dry substance, but something that reaches the heart, and people often leave cinemas with tears in their eyes. This is extremely important work.

Unfortunately, a lot of low-grade films have been made in previous years, but now they are deeper and more interesting, I think, these films are truer to life. And truth matters the most – when answering questions about today's events, the special military operation, when covering WWII events, the Great Patriotic War, when covering the special military operation. The most important thing is truth, reliability. This is our most important weapon.

If expertly-made, first-rate, vivid films are released, which touch home, it is a huge achievement, a matter of great importance. So I assure you, I'll see what can be done. We will definitely support it.

Marina Dorokhina: Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Yevgeny Borisov: Mr President, I would like to continue the aviation theme.

My name is Yevgeny Borisov, I am commander of the Medic search unit at Volgograd State Medical University. We and the Uran search association worked on the Wings of Stalingrad project. Under this project, we have already received the names of 2,000 aviators who participated in the Battle of Stalingrad.

But Russia's aviation feats are not only connected with military operations, but also with feats behind the lines. There are three centres of the aviation industry in the Volga Region, the cities of labour glory: Samara, Saratov, and Kazan.

But unfortunately, there are almost no examples of their wartime industry left. For example, the Petlyakov Pe-2 bomber. Only two samples of the 10,500 of these aircraft remained, which are displayed in the Central Air Force Museum in Monino and in the museum in Verkhnyaya Pyshma.

I would like to say that our colleagues from Kazan – the search teams – are restoring another Petlyakov-2. It will also be used as an exhibition model, but, unfortunately, it will not be able to fly in the sky.

I would also like to tell you about the Winged Memory of Victory Foundation. This foundation restores military aircraft that took

part in the Great Patriotic War and sends them into the sky.

As Marina has already said, I think it would be great if war films featured aircraft that actually saw action.

We would like support to develop this foundation, because now all this works mainly on a voluntary basis. You would agree that the planes may provoke different feelings. It is one thing to see it in a picture somewhere on the internet or somewhere else; it is another when you can touch it, hear the roar of its engine, and see how it rises into the sky.

We all have a dream that together with tanks and lorries, which participated in hostilities, legendary aircraft would perform at the parade on Red Square on May 9. I think they deserve it.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: You know, the problem is that when these aircraft were decommissioned some time after the war, they were almost all cut. And when enthusiasts get them out of the ground or from swamps, they, of course, are in the state you would expect: half-destroyed or almost completely destroyed. And the fact that these machines are recreated is generally surprising, but there are such examples. It is hard, but it is happening.

As for including them in the parade, it is an interesting idea. Let us think about it and discuss.

In general, the idea of recreating the importance of aviation for the Victory in the Great Patriotic War is a wonderful idea, to be sure. Indeed, one can even single out a special area. As a matter of fact, this is what you are doing, you singled it out, all that is needed here is support. I will talk to my colleagues and we will try to do it.

Thank you for noting this. This is a very interesting topic. Aviation has always been important, and for a certain period of time it had special significance. It is now of particular importance, like during the Great Patriotic War, and before the war, when the leadership of the USSR focused on this. I sometimes read archival documents, and at one meeting with military commanders, Stalin speaks directly about the special, great role of aviation in a future war, in future hostilities. And it is exactly what happened.

Of course, in order to understand how great this significance was, it is necessary to find materials in the archives that would confirm what you are talking about now. We will do it. We will definitely help.

Yevgeny Borisov: Thank you, Mr President.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Lev Kravchenko: Mr President, my name is Lev Kravchenko. I'm a Young Army member. The young people here spoke about search teams, and I also have an interesting story that I would like to share with you.

The story began in 2021, when a German farmer came to the Russian Consulate General and said that he found a medal For Courage on his land. They did a lot of work to identify the hero, they searched in archives, and found that holder of that medal was Viktor Golubev, a rifleman of the 91st Guards Rifle Regiment. He was awarded this medal for personally killing 13 Nazis in battles near Rostov. Viktor Golubev was killed in 1944 fighting for right-bank Ukraine. We checked everything, and there certainly was a possibility that he gave the medal to a friend to deliver it to his family, but most likely, something else happened. As we found out, Ukraine sold

its black soil (by the way, the Nazis also took it during the Great Patriotic War), and most likely, the medal got there with the soil.

And the question is: was there only a medal? Because if the medal was lost, this is one thing, but if they sold the remains of the fighters who fought for Victory, this is quite another matter. We will probably never know. They did what they could – sent the medal to Russia. And on December 20, at the Thank the Heroes concert, Arsen Popov, 15, also a Young Army member, who was also awarded the medal For Courage, handed it over to a Young Army member from Tula, and he will deliver the medal to the family.

Vladimir Putin: Does the family live in Tula?

Lev Kravchenko: Yes, Viktor Golubev was from Tula, and his family lives there.

This story, long and complicated, lacks a finale still. We have contacted Golubev's family; the medal should be delivered to them. I am ready to take part in the ceremony. I would very much like that ceremony to be held at the highest level, I would like the Governor of the Tula Region to attend, and the hero's memory to be immortalised.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: That is an amazing story. What I would like to note – I do not know who was selling fertile soil from Ukraine or when that happened, but such cases happened. They also sell round timber, although they do not have as much of it as in Siberia. The Carpathian Mountains will end up bald this way. They have been selling soil, this is true, and they still do. This is their business.

But I can't imagine selling soil along with human remains.

I cannot wrap my head around it.

But there is one more circumstance that I immediately noted while you were talking: as you said, a German farmer came and handed this medal over to our representatives in the consulate.

Lev Kravchenko: Yes.

Vladimir Putin: This means that an ordinary citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany respects our country and the heroes who defeated Nazism.

In this regard, I would like to say – and people in Germany remember this – that German anti-fascists were the first victims of German fascism and Nazism. It is very good that this memory is preserved among ordinary citizens. Unfortunately, it has eroded among today's elites.

What you have done is worth a lot. Thank you very much. I am sure that the Governor of the Tula Region will attend the event you mentioned; I will ask him. Alexei Dyumin is an officer himself, and the son of an officer, and I think, his grandfather took part in the Great Patriotic War. I have no doubt that this will be done and organised, as you said, at the highest level.

Thank you very much for this story and for what you have done.

Lev Kravchenko: Thank you.

Ivan Kovalev: Mr President, we have just talked with you about cinema and I would like to tell you about theatre, our school theatre. I have been involved in the First Row school theatre in School No. 1 in the city of Novocherkassk, the capital of the Don Cossacks.

But you know, our city is also famous because it is the home city of several members of the Young Guards. When we were

offered to stage a play based on the rock oratorio devoted to the Young Guards, we undertook this project with great enthusiasm. We studied documents and made costumes and pieces of scenery ourselves. We tried to live the lives of our heroes at least on stage and answer our own question: “Could I make it through such trials without breaking down?” I will tell you frankly – this is quite a different experience of being immersed in historical events.

The same plays were staged in ten other Russian cities. We were brought together by the wonderful project of School Classics, part of the Russian Children’s and Youth Movement with the support of the Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute.

It would be wonderful if school theatres and their plays were included in the annals of great victories. We could time our plays to the momentous events of our history, for instance, the Battle of Kursk, and hold a whole festival on the Victory anniversary.

Vladimir Putin: A festival of school theatres?

Ivan Kovalev: Yes, a festival of school theatres. You know how important it is for us, for school theatres from small towns, to perform on major stages and take part in big projects. The School Classics project gives us this chance.

Mr President, using this opportunity, I would like to invite you, on behalf of the many young actors and mentors, to attend the final of our project in Pushkin Hills on the birth anniversary of our great poet. We would like you to evaluate our work for yourself. I promise you will enjoy it.

Vladimir Putin: I am glad for you, for your interest in theatre. When people are introduced to theatre in childhood, it gives them a powerful asset for their entire lives because it promotes the development of their personality, especially if it is based

on Russian classics.

Russian classics are universally acknowledged. It is stupid to try and cancel Russian culture, no matter how much some would like to. But most important is that we realise how important it is for us, our country and our people. It is great that you are involved in this, especially if you are also turning to the heroic pages of our national history.

And so, I will certainly talk with Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova and Minister of Education Sergei Kravtsov and ask them to find together a way of supporting this school theatre movement.

Thank you very much for your invitation. I will try to see how you go about organising this event. I am sure it will be interesting.

Ivan Kovalev: Thank you very much.

Vladimir Putin: I wish you success in your endeavours.

Ivan Kovalev: Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you.

Ruslan Khusainov: Mr President, we have Misha Potovoy here. He has a story he really wants to share.

Mikhail Potovoy: Good afternoon, Mr President,

I also have a very interesting story that I would like to tell you. My name is Mikhail Potovoy, I am a cadet of the Volgograd Cadet Corps of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation named after Fedor Slipchenko.

For over 30 years, our cadets have been engaged in search and research work that started under the guidance of the founder of our institution, a war veteran and Honoured Teacher of the RSFSR Fedor Slipchenko.

In 2022, our cadet corps established a search and research team, which is engaged in researching and reconstructing the fate of heroes who defended our heroic city. At one of the classes, we learned about the fate of Stalingrad sniper Alexander Frolov.

We tried to find information about him on the internet and found out that it is very contradictory: the sources contradict each other, so, as future researchers, in order to hone our skills, we decided to get to the bottom of it, to uncover and preserve the historical memory of this hero.

We were assisted by our senior comrades – military investigators of the Investigative Committee and investigators of the Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee for the Volgograd Region. They helped us work with archival documents.

We were able to examine the personal account of Alexander Frolov and the account of the platoon under his command; we were able to examine his path through the war, his wartime and post-war biography. We believe that it is very important for the younger generation in our time to preserve this historical memory, and we will do our best to uncover the historical truth.

Thank you.

Vladimir Putin: Great.

I will definitely convey to another Alexander – Bastrykin, head of the Investigative Committee – what you just said. I am sure that your work will be supported by the leadership of the Investigative Committee.

And I wish you success, because indeed, I have already spoken about this, our strength is in the truth, that is, I was not the first

to say this, it was said long ago by other people, but I already recalled this today. And in the battle for the hearts and minds of people, the most important weapon is the truth.

And what you said: of course, there are always questions about the past, and questions about the search for truth. Of course, there are a lot of layers, a lot of contradictory information on any matter, about any person, and life is contradictory and complicated itself. But what you do is extremely important precisely from this point of view – clearing up real life events, the fate of real people.

And so, I am sure that your work will continue. You have already said that current investigators help you. I will definitely tell Mr Bastrykin about this, and the leadership of the Investigative Committee will definitely provide its support.

Mikhail Potovoy: Thank you, Mr President.

Vladimir Putin: Thank you. Great.

Is it all? Is there anything else?

Ruslan Khusainov: Apparently, everyone asked their questions and expressed their wishes. We are very glad that you took the time to listen to our questions and proposals.

We hope that we have shown you our values and the values of young people in general. We understand that our main task is to preserve historical memory. And in this regard, we are ready to use various formats of work, create new events and work.

And so, once again, thank you very much on behalf of everyone, and, if possible, we would like to take a group photo with you.

Vladimir Putin: Our main task is to ensure the preservation of Russia and create conditions for it to develop and grow stronger. And this will certainly be done. But one

of the components of the work to achieve this common goal is certainly the revival, the preservation of historical memory, what we talked about, and what you do.

I wish you success and I want to thank you again for what you do. Let's take a photo now.

Thank you, everyone, good luck.

Best wishes.

See also