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Echoes of the Polish–Soviet War of 1929 One Decade Later: History of Decorating Red Army Soldier D. V. Virchenko with the Order of the Red Banner

Abstract

The article and published documents from the Russian State Military Archive reveal the mechanism of an inspection carried out in 1930 with the view of awarding of the former soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army D. V. Virchenko for his acts of valour during the Civil War. The reason of the check up was a letter from Poland sent by the former serviceman of the Polish armed forces F. Lesmansky who, as he himself admitted, participated in the executions of the captured Red Army soldiers in 1920. F. Lesmansky described the heroic behavior of D. V. Virchenko before the execution and the circumstances of his escape (the Red Army soldier and

his comrades managed to take possession of weapons and shoot the best part of Polish guardsmen) and petitioned the Soviet executive authorities for his decoration with an order. The letter enclosed a certificate issued to D. V. Virchenko in 1920 confirming his right to receive three Orders of the Red Banner. In 1928 D. V. Virchenko was decorated with the Order of the Red Banner on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Due to complex foreign situation and problems in interior affairs, F. Lesmansky's letter drew attention of the USSR leaders, namely, K. E. Voroshilov and J. V. Stalin. A short note of J. V. Stalin initiated an additional examination of the awarding of D. V. Virchenko. The analysis of published materials and archival sources allows to reconstruct the course of the inspection and its results. Although it was successful, D. V. Virchenko did not receive any additional awards, despite repeated appeals in 1930s. In the appendix, documents directly related to the events described in the article are being published: a copy of the letter by the former Polish serviceman F. Lesmansky with K. E. Voroshilov's resolution addressed to J. V. Stalin; a copy of the certificate issued to D. V. Virchenko in 1920 confirming his right to be decorated with three Orders of the Red Banner; J. V. Stalin's note addressed to K. E. Voroshilov; an information sheet prepared in the People's Commissariat for Army and Navy Affairs with a brief information on D. V. Virchenko.

Keywords

Polish–Soviet War of 1920, Red Army soldiers in the Polish captivity, J. V. Stalin, K. E. Voroshilov, Order of the Red Banner.

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