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“He Who Survives This War, Will Be Forever Happy and Free ...” Front-Line Diary of the Hero of the Soviet Union V. B. Borsoev as a Source on the History of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45

Abstract

Military diaries of the Great Patriotic War are a rare type of sources that requires detailed study. The diary entries of the Hero of the Soviet Union, Commander of the 7th Guards Tank Destroyer Artillery Brigade, Colonel Borsoev Vladimir Buzinaevich, published in this article, are to introduce new documents into scientific use and to expand the research field. The archaeographic method of research has made it possible to compile a short historical description of the diary and to publish three diary entries for July 5 – August 13, 1943, that describe author’s participation in the famous Battle of Kursk; the Kursk Bulge was the game changer of the Great Patriotic War. The diary is stored in the State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia; it is of great interest to researchers, since it reflects events of the war and front-line everyday life from the perspective of a Soviet officer all through war. Its entries begin on July 10, 1941 and end on March 7, 1945 (with the author’s death from a fatal wound). There are 274 entries in the diary, which are unevenly distributed over the years. For five and a half months of 1941 V. B. Borsoev made 116 records, while for three full years from 1942 to 1944 he made 152 entries. The records for 1941 are distinctive in completeness of description of military operations, as well as in analysis of artillery battles. The scenes of hostilities give way to worries about his family. In the records for 1942, military events alternate with description of the military officer’s daily life, which consisted of reading and analyzing books, for example, L. Tolstoy's “War and Peace,” of watching movies, playing chess, etc. 1943–44 are represented by records stating confidence in victory and describing offensive operations in which the author took part. For more than two months of 1945 there are only six short entries. The diary of V. B. Borsoev is a unique source that includes different information layers from description of hostilities to front-line daily life. Thus, the diary deserves serious scientific research and publication.

Keywords

Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, historical source, foundation of personal origin, diary, Borsoev Vladimir Buzinayevich.

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