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Headline: Volkogonov on Progress in Tracing U.S. MIA's

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Subslug: [Interview with Dmitriy Volkogonov, cochairman of the Russian-U.S. Commission for Investigating the Fate of U.S. Citizens Missing in Action During and After World War II, by Valeriy Rudnev; place and date not given: ``There Are No U.S. Prisoners of War in Russia. There Are MIA's. They Include Robert Reynolds and his Comrades, Shot Down Over the Baltic 8 April 1950'']

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Interview with Dmitriy Volkogonov, cochairman of the Russian-U.S. Commission for Investigating the Fate of U.S. Citizens Missing in Action During and After World War II, by Valeriy Rudnev; place and date not given: ``There Are No U.S. Prisoners of War in Russia. There Are MIA's. They Include Robert Reynolds and his Comrades, Shot Down Over the Baltic 8 April 1950'']
2. [Text] The recent press conference held by Dmitriy Volkogonov and Malcolm Toon, cochairmen of the Russian-U.S. Commission for Investigating the Fate of U.S. Citizens Missing in Action During and After World War II, was delayed 15 minutes—a session of the commission was in progress. At this session, the Russian side gave the U.S. side a list of 733 U.S. citizens who until recently were classified as missing in action. Today their fate has become known thanks to the work of the commission. Immediately after the end of the press conference, D. Volkogonov agreed to give an interview specially to IZVESTIYA.
3. [Rudnev] Dmitriy Antonovich, you were recently ``interrogated'' by the U.S. Senate. You told the senators that there are currently no U.S. prisoners of war on Russian territory. What is the basis for your conviction?
4. [Volkogonov] It is based on the results of more than six months' work by our commission. Our conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of a whole set of archive documents, including ones that have only just been declassified, interrogation of witnesses, and the results of inspections of localities where foreign citizens might be detained.
5. We have established that since the beginning of World War II,

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thousands of U.S. citizens have passed through the territory of the former USSR. Most of them—22,454 people—were Americans liberated by the Red Army from Nazi concentration camps who were subsequently repatriated. The second group comprises 730 U.S. airmen who made forced landings on USSR territory, were initially interned, and then also returned to their homeland. Then there are several dozen people who found themselves in the USSR as a result of cold war operations—arrested in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany, Austria, the USSR, and other socialist countries for so-called "espionage" activities, and also a few airmen from U.S. aircraft shot down over USSR territory. We have managed to trace the fate of practically all of these Americans and are convinced that they do not exist on the territory of the former USSR at the present time (excluding those who died).

6. Incidentally, we have been able to establish the burial sites of almost all the U.S. citizens who have died in our country since the start of World War II. Unfortunately, we have still not been able to locate some of the graves.

7. [Rudnev] You mention people kept here by force, that is to say they were basically prisoners. But didn't Americans turn up in our country under other circumstances, of their own volition, for example? Are you looking for them as well?

8. [Volkogonov] Of course we are. I can tell you that there are Americans currently living in Russia who in the past requested political asylum in the USSR or who voluntarily stayed on our territory. The commission has obtained a list of their names (over 10 surnames), their addresses (Kiev, Tbilisi, St. Petersburg), and the agreement of these persons to meet with representatives of the U.S. side, and we are prepared to make these available to our U.S. colleagues. There is another unique case—U.S. citizen Marcus Lee (a businessman from Florida) was arrested in the spring of 1992 and is currently in Lefortovo Detention Center. He has been accused of attempting to smuggle icons out of the country.

9. There are also former U.S. citizens on USSR territory who were forced to renounce their U.S. citizenship in the 1940's and 1950's following threats and scare tactics. Their fate is tragic: Almost all of them passed through camps and exile, most of them died, but some of them are still living in our country today. Their surnames and addresses are also known. These are all the facts we have at our disposal concerning the "Russian" Americans.

10. [Rudnev] There have been many rumors about U.S. citizens missing in action during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Are we connected with the disappearance of U.S. servicemen or not?

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11. [Volkogonov] Up to the present there have never been any documents or eyewitness accounts of U.S. prisoners of war staying on former USSR territory or being brought across from Korean territory to the territory of a third country. And we have been unable to discover anything new relating to the Vietnam war. The only documents connected with the Vietnam war have already been made public—they indicate the fate of nine U.S. deserters who were brought to USSR territory by the KGB and then transported to neutral countries. Nor has it proved possible to establish anything new or important from discussions with eyewitnesses and participants in these events.

12. Do not forget that the events of these wars unfolded outside USSR territory. But nonetheless we have been able to find some documents relating to the Korean war in our archives: Information about the number of camps for U.S. prisoners of war on Korean territory, their location, and the number of prisoners of war that each one contained. The interrogation material used by the Soviet special services and desultory information about 71 U.S. servicemen captured in Korea has been discovered. Besides this, as a result of a page-by-page examination of the archives it has been possible to identify another 109 surnames of U.S. citizens captured in Korea between 1951 and 1953. We are relaying this information to the U.S. side in the hope that this will be of assistance in the work of searching for U.S. citizens who went missing in action.

13. [Rudnev] IZVESTIYA is conducting its own investigation into the fate of U.S. airmen—Robert Reynolds and his comrades, who were shot down over the Baltic 8 April 1950. Unfortunately, the latest answer we have received from the Russian Defense Ministry is not encouraging—it has basically suggested to us that we should close the file on this investigation: They say there is no documentary information about this incident. Is your commission dealing with this story?

14. [Volkogonov] We are following IZVESTIYA's investigation with close attention; we value the newspaper's cogent and considered approach in its work involving the documentation. Your information fully matches the material at the disposal of our commission. And in my view it is still too early to close the file on this case. There are still circumstances that need to be explained.

15. Right now we are finishing work on checking all 10 air skirmishes in which our interceptors shot down U.S. aircraft. Incidentally, my colleague Malcolm Toon set off for Vladivostok after our press conference to look into the circumstances of one of the skirmishes. A U.S. B-52 was shot down in 1953 in the Far East.

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16. I must say frankly that not everybody in the new Russia treats the problems faced by our commission in the same way. Unfortunately, there are still a number of people in our country who think in the old way, who have a strongly ingrained "image of the enemy," and who cannot fully understand that human life and freedom are the very greatest and abiding values. Therefore the activity of our commission is a good moral example in the struggle for human rights, human freedom, and the right of relatives to know the whole truth about their nearest and dearest.

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