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**Sergey Viktorovich Podzolko-
a Veteran of the Afghan War, a Warrior - Internationalist
from the Village of Staromarevka**

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The word "war" is connected with many negative feelings and recollections. The war is pain, blood, hunger, it is sound of guns and bombs, fire, death, these are endless tears ... War destroys the lives of hundreds, thousands, sometimes millions of people. Only the soldiers themselves know what WAR is. A person who has not been there will not be able to understand the meaning of this word. The war in Afghanistan is one of the main events of the Cold War, after which the crisis of the communist system and the collapse of the USSR followed.

In January 1929, with the help of the British, the Nadir Shah dynasty came to power and ruled until July 1973. On the 27th of April of 1978, a national democratic revolution took place in Afghanistan. In the same year, the Soviet-Afghan agreement on friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation was concluded. During 1978-1979, the leaders of Afghanistan repeatedly turned to the leadership of the USSR for military assistance to "retain the gains of the April revolution." The USSR, for which this revolution was a surprise, officially supported it from the first days.

In 1979, the USSR sent troops to Afghanistan. Eighteen-year-old soldiers were sent to fulfill their "sacred duty and the honorable duty of a citizen of the USSR." This war lasted for long terrible nine years. Nine years of anguish, blood and dead soldiers, children, old people and women, screams and tears, despair and hope. Every day people prayed for the end of the war.

Not much time has passed since that war and those who had participated in that war are still alive. Among them is Podzolko Sergey Viktorovich who was born in the village of Staromarevka on the 5th of January in 1966 into an intellectual family, where a special emphasis was placed on the patriotic upbringing. This family knows firsthand what patriotism and defense of the homeland are. As Sergey Viktorovich claims there are people to look up to and to be proud of. One of his grandfathers was awarded the Order of Glory, Third Degree. He was awarded for courage and military merit as well. His second grandfather went missing in Ukraine. Their group of scouts was pushed to the river. They threw themselves into the water. Eleven people came out of the river by swimming and he the twelfth one went missing.

As Sergei Viktorovich likes to say: "We have a family tradition to defend the Motherland." His son also became a soldier internationalist. He served in Syria as a pilot- major.

Sergey Viktorovich like other veterans of that war do not like to tell much about the war. Yesterday's schoolchildren, boys of 18-19 years old had to learn to kill, learn to defend themselves, survive in unthinkable conditions: sands, storms, lack of water, heat during the day, cold at night (especially in the mountains), snakes,

phalanges, scorpions, diseases, lice ... They had to fight with 35-45-year-old men provided with everything necessary, whose profession was to fight.

"When I was drafted into the army,- tells Sergey Viktorovich,- I didn't know anything about Afghanistan. Up until 1985, in the press and on television, they told us that Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan were planting trees and building schools and hospitals. But soon at the base we were trained and taught to shoot.

Landing in the war, we understood very quickly that we had to live by the rules of war. And the quicker you learned the rules, the longer you had to live by them. You didn't think about whether you were defending someone's revolution or defending the 'southern borders of the motherland'. You simply shot at those who were shooting at you and at your friend behind you."

Sergey Viktorovich served in Kandahar located in the south of Afghanistan on the Arghandab River. It is Afghanistan's second largest city after Kabul, also it is the capital of Kandahar Province. As he tells he wasn't scared. He wasn't surprised. At that point he did not care anymore because he just understood that it is impossible to change anything. To serve in the Soviet army is the honourable duty of Soviet citizens – as it was written in our Constitution. And it was our honourable duty to serve to our Motherland." Today Sergey Viktorovich is the chairman of the Grachevka branch of the Russian Union of Afghan Veterans. On his initiative the memorial complex "Cranes" was erected in the village of Grachevka in 2015. Many honored guests, including the governor of the region, Vladimir Vladimirov, participated in the opening of the memorial.

On February 15, 1989, as a result of the policy of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the troops of General Gromov were withdrawn from the territory of Afghanistan. The army commander himself crossed the Soviet-Afghan border, the last.

February 15, 1989. This date went down in history as the Day of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. The events of those years are assessed differently. Those who gave orders, those who carried them out, view the Afghan war differently. But for the both, the actions that took place on the territory of Afghanistan fit into one capacious and terrible word - WAR. A war that must never be repeated, the lessons of which must be learned for the rest of the life.

Each of the hundreds of thousands people who went through this war became part of Afghanistan, part of its land. And Afghanistan became a part of everyone who fought there. This war is an unhealing wound in the souls of people who fought

there, waiting for their sons, husbands, brothers and sisters ... It is unbearably painful to look at the faces of mothers whose sons did not return from that war...

As a participant in the hostilities Sergey Viktorovich displayed genuine heroism and dedication in fulfilling his international duty. He fulfilled his duty and remained faithful to the military oath. "For those who do not know the war, the Afghan events should be a lesson. May nobody ever be able to feel the pain that was then. This pain is incomparable with anything!" , - tells Sergey Viktorovich.

We must be grateful to our soldiers for the protection that cost the lives of many of them. We must be grateful that we sleep in the peaceful air and hear only the sounds of nature, not gunshots and tears. It is our duty always to remember these heroes and be proud of them.

Celebrating the 32nd anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, we traditionally remember the heroes of that war. But the memory of Afghanistan is not only a tribute to people who heroically performed their duty, their valour and courage. This is also a reason for rethinking the essence of modern conflicts, an invaluable experience, unfortunately, so far not fully claimed.

On the 13th of April 2021 there was an open class hour at school 7 of village Staromarevka which was dedicated to the Day of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989.

There were guests at that open class hour.

1. Tsybal Vitaly Vasilyevich - the chairman of the council of the regional branch of the All-Russian public organization of veterans "Combat Brotherhood", a veteran of hostilities in Afghanistan and the Caucasus;

2. Borisenko Nikolai Ivanovich - the head of the council of the regional branch of the All-Russian public organization of veterans "Combat Brotherhood", a veteran of military operations in Afghanistan;

3. Podzolko Sergey Viktorovich - the chairman of the Grachevsky branch of the All-Russian public organization of veterans "Combat Brotherhood", a veteran of military operations in Afghanistan.

The guests did not come empty-handed. They brought with them a mobile exposition "THE COMPANY GOING TO IMMORTALITY" dedicated to the feat of the Pskov paratroopers - the 6th parachute - airborne company of the 104th guards parachute regiment of the 76th guards paratrooper division.

The talk between the guests and the student helped to develop an interest in the history of the last century; instilling respect for the older generation; broadening the horizons of students, spiritual enrichment with the poetic and song heritage of the internationalist warriors.





**Some photos from Sergey Viktorovich`s own album.
Recollections about Afghanistan**







