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Gold "Hammer and Sickle" Medal of a Hero of Socialist Labor, Type 2, Variation 3, #14011, awarded on 22 March 1966 to Hilja Laretei (Хилья Иохановна Ларетей), a female worker at a state pig farm in Soviet Estonia.

The star is in solid 23 K gold; suspension device is in gold-plated silver. The medallion measures 33.3 mm in height (incl. eyelet), 31.9 mm in width and weighs 15.6 grams not including the suspension and connecting link; total weight with suspension and screw plate is 28.4 g. The suspension measures 26.3 mm wide. Features serial number stamped on the lower part of the reverse (Variation 3).

Very fine to excellent condition. The obverse is beautifully preserved and has only microscopic contact marks unnoticeable to the naked eye, shows practically no wear to the ridges and facets. There are no edge knocks or nicks; the tips of the arms are free of the usual bumps. The reverse has several scratches in the lower part but they do not affect the serial number and are not very detractive. The raised lettering is nicely preserved and crisp; most of the stippling is likewise pristine. There is very attractive slightly reddish toning to the gold in the upper part where the star came in contact with the silver connecting link.

Includes original suspension device complete with the rectangular back plate, hexagon nut and mint-marked screw plate which measures 18.7 mm wide and weighs 3.7 g. There is very attractive matching patina on all parts of the suspension while the original fire gilt finish is clearly visible. The screw post is full length, over 12.5 mm measured from the rectangular back plate. The perfectly preserved old ribbon is probably original to the medal. The connecting link appears to be original as well; its ends are seamlessly joined with solder in the manner characteristic of the Soviet mint.

The name of the recipient has been determined using the serial number table in the reference guide Heroes of Socialist Labor by Vadim Latysh, C. 2020, Moscow. According to the information found on several Internet sites including warheroes.ru, Hilja Laretei was born in 1930 in a village of the Viljandimaa District of Estonia, at the time an independent state. While still a little girl, she saw the Soviet annexation of Estonia and the German occupation that followed shortly thereafter.

In 1949, after completing six grades of school, Laretei found a job as a worker at a construction agency in Estonian SSR and a year later, was hired as a milkmaid at a collective farm. After changing several farm jobs over the following years, she finally became farm hand at the highly regarded state pig farm in the village of Hummuli, Valgamaa Region. Already having prior experience in pig farming, Laretei soon became one of the foremost workers at the farm.

Laretei especially distinguished herself in 1966 when she raised 1765 piglets by employing new techniques of care for the sows. This output was rated exceptionally good at the time; she also achieved excellent results in the weight gain among the piglets in her care. Thanks in large part to her efforts, her state farm increased the output of meat by 20 per cent within a year and became the second best in the district. During the following year, Laretei was made a Hero of Socialist Labor by a decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for his exceptional achievements in animal farming.

As a highly distinguished farm worker, Laretei became a member of her District Council (Soviet), a position she occupied from 1967- 69. After her retirement she lived in the village of Helme of the Valgamaa Region where she passed away in 1991, the year when Estonia once again gained its independence.

Additional information about Hilja Laretei is available on the Internet, in particular on the Russian language website warheroes.ru.

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