

Letter to Stalin from the entire Personnel of the 18th Army, signed by 37,658 EM, NCO, officers & generals with Leonid Brezhnev's signature among them, dated February 23, 1944.

This is a folder measuring approx. 12 ½ x 9 x 2", with additional hard cardboard leatherette-bound covers. Weighs nearly 5 lbs. The letter was composed to congratulate Stalin with the 26th anniversary of the Red Army (February 23 was established as the Red Army Day in 1922). Multiple copies of the letter were sent out to every unit comprising the 18th Army, where the letter was read aloud, discussed, and signatures of every person in every unit collected, from private to general, 37,658 signatures total. All of them, together with all the copies of the letter and additional signature pages, have been organized in the folder we are offering.

The cover of the folder reads "To the Supreme Commander Marshal of the Soviet Union I.V. Stalin". The title page is preceded by a cardboard insert page featuring a b/w print of the 1943 oil on canvas painting by P. Vasilyev. The artist's handwritten signature and date are in the lower right-hand corner of the image. The portrait is protected by a sheet of rice paper.

The internal pages are held together by a purple silk ribbon. Shortage of paper at that time and under the circumstances accounts for a wide variety of different quality paper used to type the letter, and an even wider variety of paper used for additional signature pages: from regular letter-size typing paper to rice paper, to pages from notepads, to large ledger sheets, to graph paper, to lined elementary school notebook pages, to German military topographical tactical maps.

One of the signatures (we left a bookmark on that page) belongs to the then chief political officer of the 18th Army and, later, General Secretary of the CPSU Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (in one of our photos).

The first signature, in red pencil, belongs to the Commander of the 18th Army, Lt. Gen. Yevgeniy Zhuravlyov (Евгений Петрович Журавлев, 1896 - 1983). His military career began in 1916 in the Russian Imperial Army. His last post, to which he was appointed in 1955, was Chief of the Personnel Department of the land Armed Forces of the Soviet Union. He retired in 1960 and lived in a Moscow suburb until his death in 1983.

The 18th Army, formed in 1941, became part of the Southern Front. It participated in multiple major operations, defensive at the beginning of the war, mostly offensive since the Rostov offensive in the late fall of 1941. It played a major role in the Battle of the Caucasus, re- capturing the Crimean Peninsula, and many others including the Malaya Zemlya (Russian for "small land") operation made famous by Leonid Brezhnev who described it in his book of the same title where he exaggerated his role in it as much as the ghost writers who actually wrote the book saw fit.

In good overall condition. The folder is in fair condition: the hard front cover wrapped in leatherette is separated from the spine. The top, bottom, and side flaps of the folder show moderate wear and partial separations due to tears to the leatherette. The hard cover in the back is mostly intact, showing just minor tears to the leatherette at the top and bottom, and mild staining.

The documents inside the folder are in good to very good condition. There is mild to moderate age toning to the paper, small corner bumps and minor fraying at the edges but, most importantly, the paper is still quite supple and allows to turn the pages, carefully but with ease.


We cannot overemphasize the uniqueness and raw authenticity of this one-of-a-kind document. Addressed and sent personally to Stalin, containing original signatures of almost 38 thousand personnel of an entire army, one of the signatures belonging to the future General Secretary of the Communist Party. Not only will it be the crown jewel of any collection of WW2 Soviet militaria and a fantastic conversation piece. It is just an awesome historical artifact!

Please note that the pen in our last photo is for size reference.

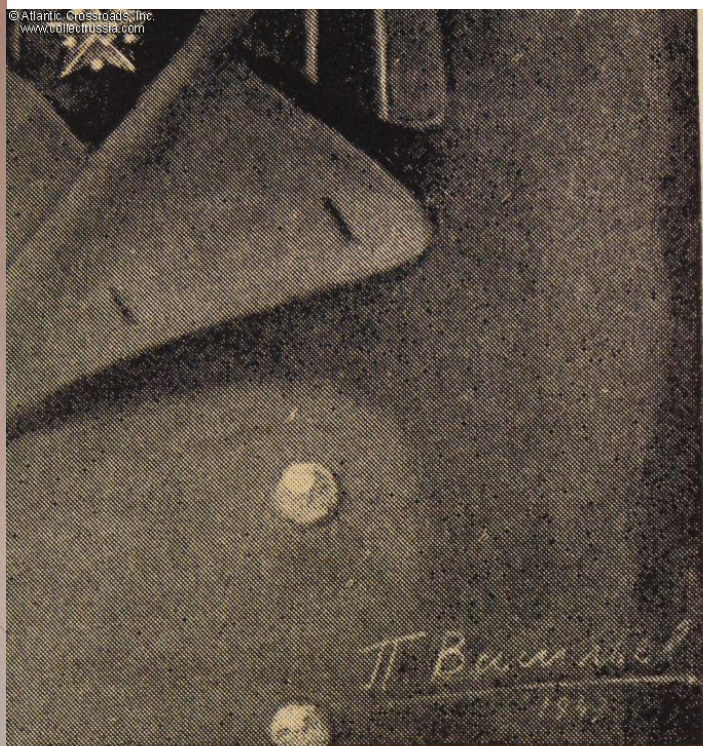
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Верховному
Главкомандующему
Маршалу
Советского Союза
И.В. СТАЛИНУ



Маршалу
Советского Союза
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ПИСЬМО
товарищу СТАЛИНУ
от бойцов, сержантов, офицеров
и генералов 18 армии

25 февраля 1944 года
1-й Украинский фронт

МОСКВА, КРЕМЛЬ
ВЕРХОВНОМУ ГЛАВНОКОМАНДУЮЩЕМУ
МАРШАЛУ СОВЕТСКОГО СОЮЗА
ГОСПОДИНУ **ИОСИФУ ВИССАРИОНОВИЧУ СТАЛИНУ.**

ОТ РЯДОВЫХ, СЕРЖАНТОВ, ОФИЦЕРОВ И ГЕНЕРАЛОВ 18 АРМИИ.

ДОРОГОЙ ГОСПОДИН ВИССАРИОНОВИЧ!

С чувством огромной радости и законной гордости за наш великий советский народ, за нашу Родину, за наши успехи и победы выступили мы Ваш исторический приказ, посвященный 26-и годовщине героической Красной Армии.

Он воодушевляет нас на новые подвиги, еще больше укрепляет нашу уверенность в своих силах, рождает новое еще более высокое стремление стойко и бесстрашно пробиваться вперед на Запад.

В своем приказе Вы подводите итоги гигантским битвам, разбитым огромных просторах нашей Родины, особенно на правобережье и в долине ДНЕПРА. В этих сражениях немцы вновь потеряли своих друзей, тысячи танков, самолетов, артиллерийских орудий и множество другого вооружения. Войска Красной Армии подходят к западным границам нашей советской отчины. Всем этим мы обязаны великой партии большевиков, Вам наш дорогой и любимый вождь и учитель товарищ СТАЛИН.

С гениальной прозорливостью предвидите Вы, наш мудрый полководец, дальнейшее развитие и исход новых величайших сражений, в которых враг будет окончательно разгромлен.

Не раз мы мерялись силами с немецкими войсками, в кровяных боях закалялись, приобрели богатый опыт, научились быть так, как учите Вы - без промаха, наверняка, на горных перевалах у ТУАЛОС, на кубовских равнинах у КРАСНОДАРА, в степях НОВОРОССИЙСКА и Таманского полуострова враг завладал силой наших ударов. Били мы немцев под КОРОСТЫШЕВЫМ и РАДОМИШЛЕМ, били мы их под АТОМНОМ и БЕРДЮЧЕВЫМ.

Войны нашей армии показывали чудеса храбрости и героизма, бесстрашие, примеры самопожертвования и беззаветного служения Родине, непревзойденные образцы находчивости и воинского мастерства. Родина достойно наградила своих героев. Многие красноармейцы и офицеры отмечены высокими званием Героя Советского Союза, более пяти тысяч награждены орденами и медалями нашей страны. В суровых боях мы пять раз заслужили Вашу благодарность.

Но вперед еще много упорных и ожесточенных боев. Враг терпит поражение за поражением. Однако, он еще не разбит.

