

## Group of Three Documents to Aleksandr Gonshtein (Александр Кондратьевич Гонштейн).

Document for the RKKA 20th Anniversary Medal, #009577, issued on 20 February 1938. Hard-covered cloth-bound booklet measuring 7.5 x 9.5 cm when closed. Shows that the recipient's rank at the time was a major. There is a provision for a photo which was never added to the document, as was often the case. The typographically printed serial number appears on the top of the opposite page and the hand-written date of issue near the bottom.

The 20th Anniversary document is in very good condition. The cloth binding shows moderate wear along the edges and a minor amount of soiling but is still tight and overall presentable. The internal pages are clean although showing the normal age toning.

Photo ID #16 allowing entry to an unspecified restricted area, circa 1950s. Hard-covered blue booklet, 9.5 x 6.5 cm. As typical for IDs of this nature, the inscription on the cover only says "A Pass". In the photo Gonshtein appears to be in his 50s. The ID is signed by the director and chief of security of the unnamed enterprise. The blue ink stamp says "Personnel Department", the rest of it is illegible. The ID is in excellent condition, perfectly clean and crisp, and showing only minimal wear to the cover.

Photo ID #135 allowing entry to an unspecified restricted area, circa 1963. Hard-covered green booklet, 9 x 6 cm. The cover is blank apparently owing to the highly secretive nature of the enterprise that issued the ID. In the photo Gonshtein appears to be about a decade older than in the previous ID and is wearing civilian clothes. The typographically printed text states that the ID must be turned in after it expires; the entries below show that it's valid through 1964 and extended through the end of 1965. The ink stamps show only the Pochtovyi Yashchik ("Mail Box") number YaV-48/2 instead of the actual name of the enterprise; the hand-written entry on the right says that the owner is allowed entry into this facility. Curiously, both stamps show the abbreviation MOOP i.e., Ministry for Protecting the Public Order - which was the name of the Soviet MVD during the early part of the 60s. At the time, the ministry was in charge of protecting and running top-secret installations throughout the Soviet Union, including nuclear objects, weapon design bureaus, and armament plans (later on, the most sensitive part of this task was relegated to KGB). The ID is in very good to excellent condition. It shows light wear to the cover and internal pages, but remains sound and clean. All the hand-written entries are completely legible.

According to the information found on the Russian archival website Pamyat-naroda.com, Aleksandr Gonshtein was born in 1903 to a family of German ethnicity (so-called Volga Deitsch or "Volga Germans") in what would be later known as the Stalingrad Region. In 1920, during the Russian Civil War, he enlisted in the Red Army eventually becoming a professional military officer. In 1936, he was awarded with an Order of the Red Star - a very rare honor at the time - and by 1938, had been promoted to Major thus escaping the waves of purges that had decimated the Soviet officer corps. In the fall of 1941 however, he was expelled from the Red Army likely due to his German ethnicity. Transferred to the labor front, Gonshtein spent the rest of the war as well as the post-war decades in Chelyabinsk apparently working in one of the Yashchik ("Box") enterprises producing top-secret weapons for the Soviet war machine. Some additional facts about his career and biography may be revealed in the future through historical publications or eventual opening of the Russian archives.

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