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## Large Folder with Greetings to Air Force Colonel General Aleksandr Koldunov presented on his 50th birthday, 1973.

Large 9 1/2" x 13" folder in leatherette-wrapped hard cover. The title page of the greeting insert reads "To Twice Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel General of Aviation Aleksandr Ivanovich Koldunov. Inside, the left page has a b/w photo portrait of Koldunov in dress uniform. The greetings were sent from the Air Defense Forces of the Baku Military District and bear the hand signatures of its Commander and Chief of its Political Department.

In very good condition. The leatherette of the cover is in great shape, showing just a tiny rip to the bottom of the rear cover near the spine. The silk lining on the inside of the cover shows mild staining, mostly along the hinge. The insert with the greetings is in excellent condition.

Then Major General and future Supreme Marshal of Aviation Aleksandr Koldunov (Александр Иванович Колдунов, 1923 - 1992) was the eighth highest scoring Soviet fighter ace of WW2, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, and supreme commander of the Soviet Air Defense in the late 70s through the late 80s. Although a highly skilled and illustrious fighter pilot, Koldunov's claim to fame in the West centered around friendly fire incidents and failure to prevent Mathias Rust, a West German, from landing a Cessna airplane on Moscow's Red Square. This humiliation to the entire Soviet armed forces led to Koldunov's immediate dismissal.

Koldunov's fortunes rose during WW2 as a Yak pilot when he became a specialist in the hit-and-run diving attack, aggressively firing at close quarters and breaking away to attack again. Many of his air victories were scored against Luftwaffe fighter craft in the Southern sector. Koldunov's WW2 service included one of aviation history's most unlikely dogfights - against USAAF Lightnings of the 15th AF in a case of mistaken identity. Koldunov, who reportedly shot down 3 American aircraft in the melee, put an end to the friendly fire incident by bravely closing alongside the Lightnings to establish his flight's identity as "friendly" Soviets.

While his postwar career began with great promise, the specter of friendly fire seemed to plague Koldunov, and his career ultimately ended in a humiliation of epic proportions. In 1968 Koldunov was Deputy Commander of the Baku Air Defense District. One year later he was moved to the Ministry of Defense for a brief tour of duty, and in 1970 he succeeded Colonel-General Vasili Okunev as CINC of the ultra-important Moscow Air Defense District.

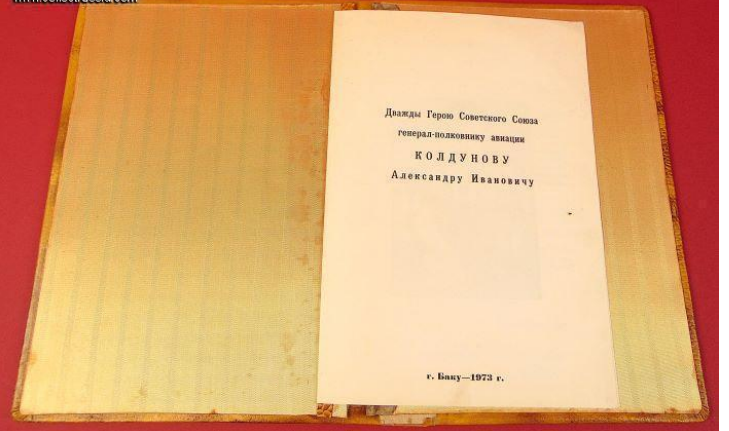
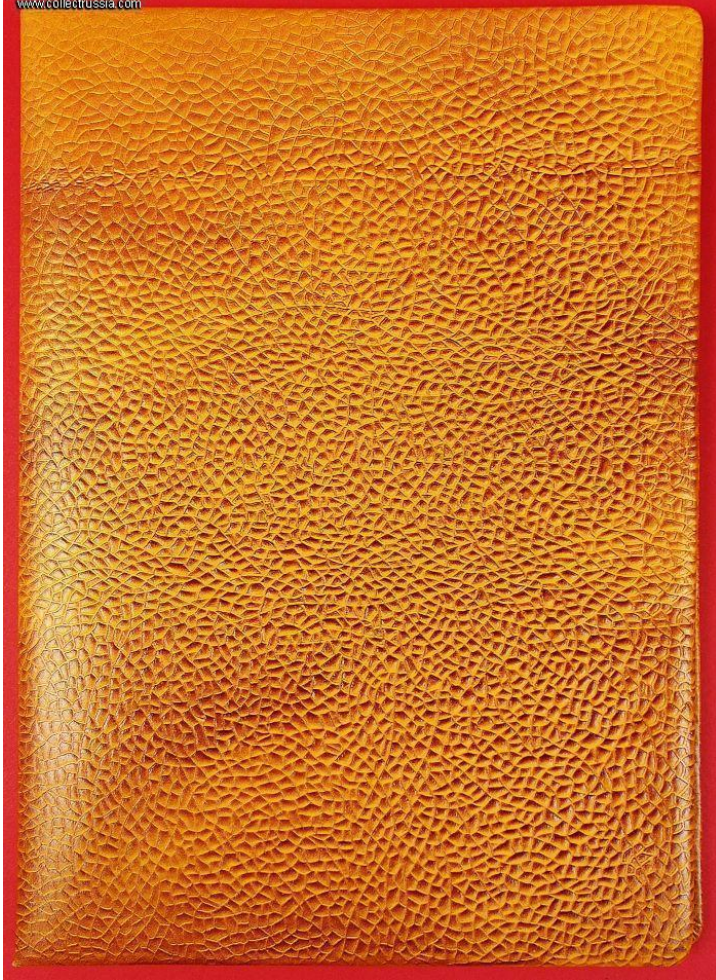
Koldunov's career continued to rise. In 1978 he was promoted to Marshal of the Air Force in charge of PVO (Air Defense) of the entire country. It was at this post that his career began to unravel. In 1978, a missile was fired at a commercial airliner with loss of 2 people. On September 1, 1983, a commercial 747 airliner, Korean Air Flight 007, strayed off course and was shot down resulting in needless death of 269 civilians. But it wasn't until 1987 that his career came to an end at the hands of 19-year-old West German student Mathias Rust who penetrated air defenses under Koldunov's authority, to land his Cessna in Red Square.

The event hit the Soviet Union like a bombshell as it became evident that the much-touted "impenetrable" air defense system was a hollow shell created by the Communist propaganda machine, like so much else that was the Soviet Union. Koldunov was forced to retire from his post, a humiliation that perhaps contributed to his death in 1992. Although Koldunov was made a scapegoat for this failure, the truth was fast becoming clear to the Soviet population. Events like Rust's flight and the Chernobyl nuclear accident a year earlier created a very real sense that the Communist Regime was teetering on the brink of collapse.

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

Item# 45516

**\$180.00**



**Уважаемый  
Александр Иванович!**

От имени Военного совета, солдат, сержантов, офицеров и генералов Бакинского округа противовоздушной обороны и от себя лично горячо и сердечно поздравляем Вас с пятидесятилетием со дня рождения.

Ваш славный боевой путь от летчика—истребителя до командующего войсками ордена Ленина Московского округа ПВО является ярким примером беззаветного выполнения воинского долга, служения делу Коммунистической партии и советского народа.

В годы Великой Отечественной войны, защищая честь, свободу и независимость нашей Родины, Вы проявили высокое летное и боевое мастерство, личное мужество, бесстрашие и героизм, за что дважды удостоены высокого звания Героя Советского Союза, награждены многими орденами и медалями.

В послевоенные годы, работая на ответственных руководящих должностях в войсках противовоздушной обороны страны, в том числе в Бакинском округе ПВО, Вы проявляете высокие организаторские способности, умение, знание дела в воспитании и обучении войск, в укреплении обороноспособности нашей страны.

В день Вашего пятидесятилетия желаем Вам, Александр Иванович, крепкого здоровья, большого личного счастья и новых успехов в Вашей ответственной работе.

Командующий войсками Бакинского округа  
противовоздушной обороны  
генерал-лейтенант  
авиации *А. Константинов* **КОНСТАНТИНОВ**

Член Военного совета—  
начальник полуправления Бакинского округа ПВО  
генерал-лейтенант *В. Быченко* **БЫЧЕНКО**

