

Speech by Remco Reiding, Foundation Soviet Field of Honour

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Stichting Sovjet Ereveld
ФОНД СОВЕТСКОЕ ПОЛЕ СЛАВЫ

Excellencies, dear guests,

Twenty years ago these 865 Soviet soldiers were all considered to be missing in action. It seemed impossible to trace and inform their relatives. When I said that I wanted to try anyway, people told me that it would be a mission impossible.

Now, 208 families have been informed that their beloved husband, father or grandfather is no longer missing and that he has been buried here. It was possible.

Thanks to sponsors and many people who have adopted a grave, our Foundation Soviet Field of Honour has managed to invite many relatives to visit the grave of their father or grandfather. Recently the relatives of Arsen Asanishvili and Arut Avedyan visited the cemetery.

Today, Sergej Jakovenko and his wife Anastasia are present. This week, on behalf of the family, they have visited the grave of his greatgrandfather Vasili Olejnikov for the first time ever, more than 75 years after he went missing. It was possible.

When I tried to identify fifteen unknown soldiers, people told me that would be impossible. This spring, by using dna, two soldiers have been positively identified. And their families have been informed. It was possible.

All these recent successes led to long reports on national television this month in Russia, in Ukraine, in Georgia, in Uzbekistan and in the Netherlands. A thousand people visited the theatral audio tours Licht, Light, a big project that

we organized here in March. More than a hundred volunteers placed flowers on each grave.

All that we have realized could not have been done without the support of all the people who have adopted a grave, without our sponsors and without our partners. I would like to specifically thank the vfonds, the ministry of defence and the local governments of Leusden and Amersfoort and the province Utrecht.

We are grateful for the support of Kamp Amersfoort and Rusthof cemetery and the understanding of its directors Willemien Meershoek and Wilco Plaggenborg and their teams. We are grateful for the cooperation with the Dutch Oorlogsgravenstichting, who has so carefully prepared this cemetery for this ceremony.

Who could have believed all this twenty years ago, when the Soviet Field of Honour had been kind of forgotten?

People might think that you are crazy, when you try to do something that seems impossible. But if you don't try, you will never know if you can succeed or not. You should never stop dreaming.

So we are going to try and dream some more in the coming years.

We are going to try to organize a group visit to the cemetery for relatives of soldiers in 2020.

Now that we have succeeded in identifying soldiers by using dna, we would like to use this on the 101 Soviet soldiers who died in and near Kamp Amersfoort. We are glad that we have the support of the Uzbek authorities, as these soldiers are considered to be from Uzbekistan.

We are going to try to get financial support from the Dutch authorities and from embassies for a complete renovation of this cemetery. And for the establishment of an information center, where the stories of the many soldiers buried here can be told. We are grateful for the cooperation with the Embassy of the Russian Federation and the financial support by the Russian authorities for these plans.

Identifying soldiers, tracing relatives, renovating the cemetery, establishing an information center. Are these just dreams? Are our plans impossible? We hope that all of you will help us make these dream come true. If so, it IS possible.