

In his E&E report (escape 279) describes Donald Oliver Mills an incident which he could not explain. The incident took place during the afternoon of October 21st 1943, one day after his landing in Eerde, when he was walking to the Belgium border.

Donald describes the incident as follows:

“They gave me instructions to go around Eindhoven and keep off main road - did this. When turning south at a road I hesitated in choosing two roads. I noticed a woman watching me from a window. She came running out of the house, screaming in Flemish. She grabbed me at the arm and pointed down on the other road and waved to go on - heard later that there were escaped Russians, lived in woods and were fed by Dutch - followed her advice and got lost”.

There were really Russians in the area Donald passed. The answer came from Azerbaijan:

Medo: The story of one Azerbaijani, who became a hero...in Netherlands

In honor of the Victory Day over fascism, the Netherlands-based “Ex Ponto” magazine (www.exponto.nl) published an article titled “Odyssey of Medo” dedicated to the Second World War and the fate of the Azerbaijani hero in the Netherlands Mammad Mammadov, known as Medo in the Dutch land. Below is the translation of an article from the Dutch language.

The Ballad of freedom

The Second World War ended exactly 65 years ago. During these 65 years, we were trying to restore the World War II events carefully studying the facts. Each new fact leads to new figures and new discussions. And the more facts found, the fiercer the debates become.

History books of 1940-1945 are still not fully restored: they have torn pages and restricted topics. There is still a lot of work to do. We obliged to keep in mind there was a brutal war imposed on humanity. There were forces that were interested in this and fought this war and there were also people who were involved in war unwittingly. The hero of our story, Azerbaijani Mammadov, who arrived in the Netherlands from a distant country, is one of those people. **This is his story.**

Serving in the Red Army

The story starts in Azerbaijan, in the Zakatala province, in ry village house.

The mother Nana-Khanum embraced 18-year old son Mathe Mughanli village on Jan. 7, 1941. A group of people are sitting on the terrace of an ordinammad for the last time before he left for a military service. The whole family came out to see off the recruit. His mother Nana-Khanum, Father Khalil, brother Mammadali, sister Tukezban and other relatives were trying to hide their tears from the soldier. The man who is called into the army should see only courage and hope in the eyes of relatives.

Like millions of other soldiers, Mammad Mammadov (nickname **Medo**) as drafted to the front. He was captured during the battle for Don in Ukraine in 1941. This was the

starting point of his adventures. He was soon declared missing in action. The family was grieving. But his mother was waiting with hope.

Medo

In those days, Mammad Mammadov's sole purpose was let his relatives know that he was alive. But all his attempts to send news to relatives failed like numerous attempts by other Russian prisoners of war.

In 1943, he and his fellows who shared the same misfortune were sent to the Netherlands and after a couple of months of stay in **Arles-Rikstre*** they were brought to North Brabant in **Ostervyayk*** They had to do hard physical work in the Grotto Spake forests*.

Medo was distinguished among other inmates. He became more and more popular not only in the boarding school, where they stayed, but also among the local population in Ostervyayk. Local residents who sympathized with him often helped him with dress and food. He, in turn, shared the gifts with his fellows. Thus, Medo became very friendly with the Dutch Sibregts family and soon fell in love with their daughter Rita Sibregts, who became a line of light in the darkness of his detention. Rita supported her Medo always, everywhere and in everything.

People loved Mammadov for his leadership qualities and numerous attempts to escape. He became a local celebrity known as Medo. He made numerous attempts to escape from the camp to join resistance fighters in the Netherlands.

Release

Finally, Medo could realize a plan of escape. During transportation to Amsterdam, he fled with his two fellows. They were met by resistance fighters. Medo and the other two Azerbaijanis began to fight together with the Dutch resistance fighters. But Medo dreamed of returning to his native Azerbaijan though he did not know what awaited him upon his return to his homeland.

With the help of partisans, he and his five companions made it to Brussels to somehow trip to Azerbaijan from there. But they were soon caught. During the transport, unconquered Medo again managed to escape with two companions. The escapees returned to Ostervyayk and stayed there until the Liberation and forever*.

Mammad Mammadov – Nederlands citizen

Medo married his beloved Rita Sibregt in Ostervyayk and began to build a new life. He worked in a shoe factory and gained popularity for various innovations that amazed those around him. He was later granted Dutch citizenship.

Medo received highest awards of the country: the title of Knight of the Royal Order, Honorary Member of the Royal Family and Honorary citizen Ostervyayk.

In his town, he became popular as the founder of a school of police dogs "Always alert" and as a coach of the youth soccer team. Later his only child, daughter Nana-khanum (Nancy), was born who later gave a birth to his granddaughter Selina. He lived in Ostervyayk until January 9, 2003. There is no one in Ostervyayk who does not know or never heard of Medo.

The Netherlands Red Cross had repeatedly appealed to the USSR with a request to find Medo's relatives. And only 14 years after liberation, Medo received the first letter from his mother Nana-Khanum. During all these 14 years he lived without any news about his family. Letters from relatives never reached him before. This became possible

during the Khrushchev thaw only after the fall of the Stalin regime. All the local newspapers covered the first letter Medo received from Azerbaijan.

After 14 years of separation, Mammad Mammadov's mother finally received good news that her missing son is not only alive and well, but also is married and lives in a country called "Holland". The Red Cross worked hard to help Mammadov to visit relatives. In his turn, Mammadov continued to write letters to Khrushchev, then leader of the Soviet Union. In the end, he succeeded to do it 31 year later in 1972! His daughter was already 11 years old.

He saw his loved ones again after 31 years, almost half of a man's lifetime. The happiness was clouded by the fact that his 82-year-old mother passed away before seeing her son, although he had dreamed of this meeting so much.

Freedom

Mammad Mammadov died in January 2003. He devoted his life to the struggle, liberation, love and good name. Mammadov was a man with a capital letter as they say in Azerbaijan. He rests beside his beloved wife Mammadova-Sibregt. Mammadov left his native village to return there a hero one day. But he became a hero in the Netherlands. The history every time and again convinces us of one thing: the important thing is not where you are, but how you live and what you fight for.

Lena Sangin, May 3, 2010

From Baku Network

International Policy and Security

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*** Arles-Rikstre is Aarle-Rixtel, Ostervyayk is Oisterwijk**

* The Russians had to work for the German army. They had to pave roads, build defense works and transport ammunition.

After return to the Soviet-Union these prisoners of war, as a result of Stalin's policy, got either capital punishment or were sent for many years to Siberia.

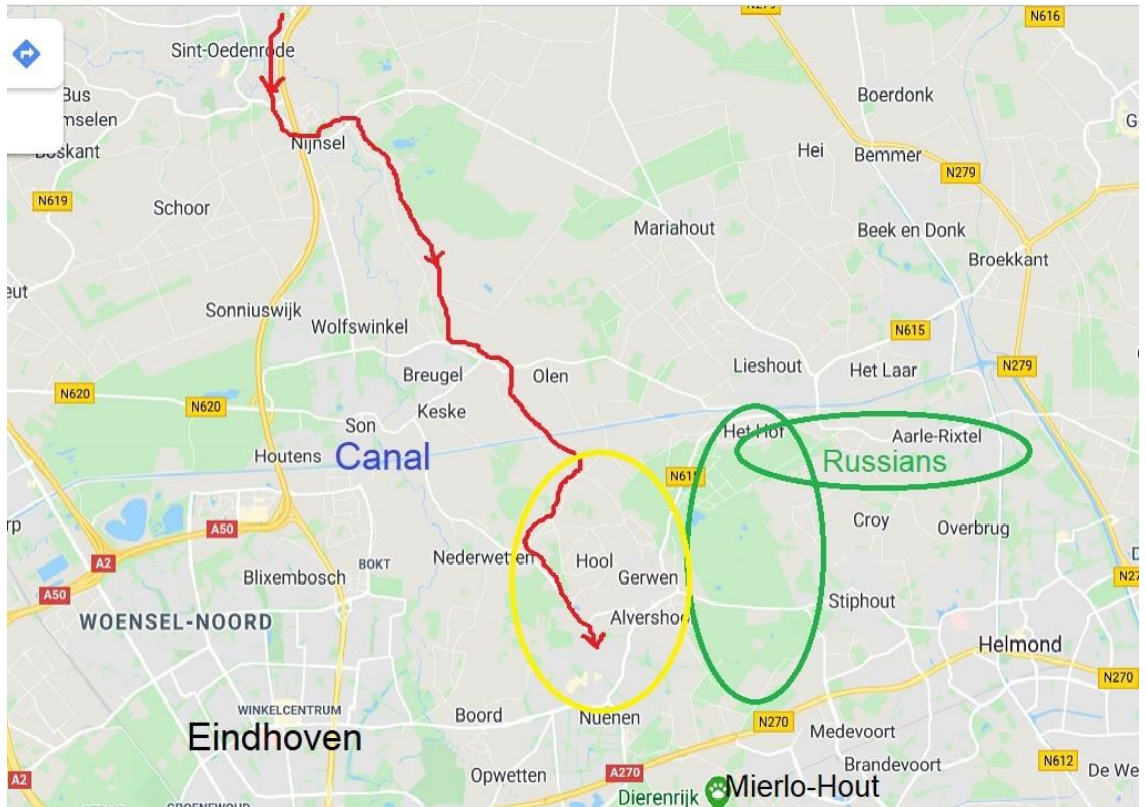
Commissioned by Azerbaijan Authorities a documentary film was made about Medo's life. The title is "Medo pride of the Dutch".

On top of that I have found a publication in Brabant Remembers (Author Ad van den Oord – 2019).

In this publication the presence of Mammad Mammadov and the Russians end 1943 is confirmed. They were not only located in Aarle-Rixtel but also in Mierlo-Hout.



Mammad Mammadov - Medo (r) in a uniform of the Dutch Army.



Google Maps area Sint-Oedenrode - Eindhoven - Helmond

The red line is the route Donald O. Mills most probably was following. We were following this track together with Don and Diann September 2019. Nuenen is the village where Vincent van Gogh once lived.

In the green circles presence of 150 Russian prisoners of war, working for the Germans
In the yellow circle the area where the incident took place.

3/20/2020 Cor Vervoort