The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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War 'Hero' Dies

April 03, 2011



RIGA, Latvia — Vasily Kononov, who fought for the Soviets during World War II but a half-century later was convicted of war crimes in his native Latvia, has died. He was 89.

Kononov died Thursday, the Russian Consulate in the city of Daugavpils said. The cause of death was not clear.

In 1998, Kononov was found guilty by a Latvian court of ordering the killing of nine civilians in 1944 and sentenced to 20 months in prison. The verdict was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in May 2010.

Many Russians consider Kononov a war hero and slammed the Latvian and EU rulings against him as a witch hunt targeting a sick and elderly man. Kononov was granted Russian citizenship in 2000 by then-President Vladimir Putin, but he chose not to leave Latvia.

(AP)

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/04/03/war-hero-dies-a6049