



Memory Lives Through Centuries event at Museum of Great Patriotic War History provides lesson for schoolchildren

‘Road of War’ gallery of heroic and tragic histories

New exposition at Belarusian State Museum of Great Patriotic War History draws on professional and real life experiences

By Viktor Korbut

Near the Minsk — Hero City Memorial, building work has commenced on the new Belarusian State Museum of Great Patriotic War History. It should throw open its doors on May 9th, 2014. Over \$10m has already been injected into the project in Pobediteley Avenue, which will become the country’s ‘calling card’.

Museum employees know well that original artefacts and interactive portals are a vital part of any modern exhibition. To understand the essence of war and the events of remote 1941-1945, visitors need to ‘experience’ something of the time. Museum Director Sergei Azaronok tells us how the new display is being born simultaneously with the construction of the new building.

“Previously, visitors were ‘struck by propaganda’ on entering the museum; we’d rather they drew their own conclusions. Vityally, we want the exhibition to capture the interest of children,” notes Mr. Azaronok. In past years, youngsters simply had to stand listening to a guide spouting patriotism and extolling the heroism of their ancestors.

Mr. Azaronok has visited other countries’ muse-

ums to see how knowledge of WWII is passed on. “Even computer games and comics are used — rather successfully. How else can we show children events from over half a century ago?”

Those walking the museum’s ‘Road of War’ will be able to imagine themselves as a soldier going to the front, then pursuing Hitler’s troops to Berlin.

“Despite the solemnity of the museum, we’ll try to give a true picture of the times. We initially planned to showcase weaponry and military technology on the first floor but later decided to create a journey through the building: the ‘Road of War’. Visitors will experience

destruction and battle via interactive video footage and recreated sets, with a cosy home awaiting at last. You’ll see a German Messerschmitt-109 attacking our I-16 battle-plane,” he explains, leading me through the idea. “Half of our Soviet I-16s didn’t even take off during the first days of the war,

and Belarus has lost its aviation within a couple of



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Director Sergei Azaronok demonstrates new museum

days, having nothing to protect with. German technology was more advanced at the time, as we’ll show. Of course, we managed to defeat the enemy despite its strength!”

Soldiers’ letters are on display under glass. Meanwhile, a field kitchen, a mortar launcher and cartridge boxes are used to create a ‘theatre of war’. 3D elements may also be included.

This year, a contractor was chosen by tender to solve the technical issues of design: Redan Design and Engineering Bureau, from Polish Szczecin. Nine candidates from Belarus and abroad applied for the tender but Redan already had experience of working on such displays at other huge military-historical museums, such as the Chopin Museum in Warsaw. Redan’s work there has raised it to

being among the best in the world; moreover, the Poles’ bid was priced at a third to half of the cost of their rivals.

The tiniest details are being given attention — from how to fill the space to light and colour. The final solutions are to then be agreed by the director and various scientific-methodical and academic councils.

“Foreseeing possible remarks from future visitors, I’m keen to gain public feedback beforehand,” Mr. Azaronok tells us. “We must gain the views of historians and veterans on once ‘closed’ topics — such as Armia Krajowa (the Polish Home Army) and the Holocaust.”

The ‘Road of War’ is to begin with the history of the three Krichetvsovy brothers, from the Gomel Region. Ordinary working men, they

went to the front in the first days of the Great Patriotic War and found themselves in a single crew. On June 24th, 1941, their tank was set ablaze during gunfire, in a battle near Grodno. They could have evacuated the tank, hiding in the nearest trench, but chose to drive into the Germans with their burning vehicle, dying in the process. They received no awards and no monument exists to their bravery. However, the museum’s new display has a photo of the three courageous young men. Their heroic deeds are a fitting first step on the journey visitors will take inside the Museum of Great Patriotic War History. A Soviet T-34 tank is to be shown attacking a German T-3 in this museum dedicated to events at once brave and tragic.

Generous present

Rare 19th century weapons to join Vitebsk Regional Local History Museum’s collection

Specialists have discovered a wooden construction by Zamkovy Ruchej (Castle Creek) at a depth of 8m from the surface, during a dig which has been operational since 2010 (monitoring the construction of administrative buildings). So far, the hilt of a weapon has been found, though without a blade, inscribed ‘1872’. A decomposing cloth holding a sword and several sabers has also been found, alongside detonating slabs. Other discoveries include a button from 1812.

The finds date from 1841 to 1883 and are in perfect condition, except for one blade which specialists hope to restore. The stamps of famous Solingen firm are seen on two articles. All are to be sent to the Vitebsk Regional Local History Museum. The haul may date from 1812, dropped during the war; it is the most likely explanation for finding such rare weapons in a single location.

This year, more fragments of walls have been found, as has the basement of Voskresenskaya Zaruchevskaya Church (initially unearthed in 2009). Finds confirm its exact location.

Cultural centres expand

Israeli Culture and Hebrew Language Study Centre opens at Maxim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University

“The creation of the Israeli Culture and Hebrew Language Study Centre demonstrates a close link between the peoples of Israel and Belarus, which has lasted for centuries. It’s difficult to find a town in Belarus which didn’t once have a Jewish community. Moreover, some Belarus-born people have come to occupy important posts in the Israeli leadership,” noted Zvi Cohen-Litant, Charge d’Affairs of Israel to Belarus, during the opening ceremony.

The Israeli Culture and Hebrew Language Study Centre is equipped with multimedia equipment and a large library. Twice a week, students and teachers from the university can attend free Hebrew lessons while artistic workshops are being conducted by university teachers and employees from the Israeli Embassy to Belarus. Some lessons are to be dedicated to studying the Bible and the cultural and political relations of Belarus and Israel, as well as the contribution of Hebrew scientists to various spheres.

The Centre of Israeli Culture is also operating within Gomel’s State University (named after Frantsisk Skorina).