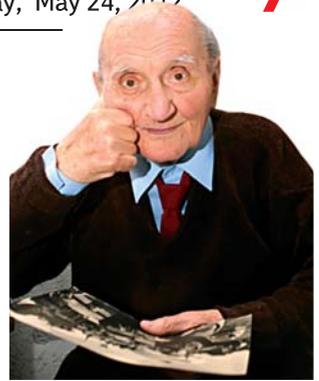


# Some words of Great Victory and war photos



Old films and black-and-white photos remember them as young soldiers and sergeants. They smile at photographers from trenches, pull heavy weaponry through bogs and mud, run to attack, and march in the Red Square parade in May 1945... These ordinary men are part of the history of humankind, acknowledged as victors. They saved us all — past and future generations — from the awful virus of the 1940s: the virus of Fascism.

By Vasily Mikhalevsky

Many of those heroes remain alive in the archive of war photographer Alexander Ditlov: in photos, film and notes — the pages yellowed with time. However, everything is ready to be published at any time. Until his death, Mr. Ditlov kept the memory of those courageous people met at the front, of whom he wrote.

Our contemporaries might hardly understand the artistic value of a matchbox sized picture of a soldier in front of a trench, his legs placed wide and arms outstretched, as if ready to embrace someone. What meaning does it have? It must surely have been destined to be sent home, showing that he was alive and uninjured but missing his relatives. Of course, many mothers and loved ones received similar 'messages' during those terrible our years. Photos from the front conjure up the pungent smoke of artillery, the speed of accelerating attack and human bodies suddenly limp, beyond pain once mown down by bullets. A sea of helmets surges forward. Bedraggled refugees carry their simple belongings. Children



without parents are fed porridge by soldiers. Some of these true heroes survived and returned — whether awarded or injured.

In the summer of 1944,

Mr. Ditlov's regiment crossed the River Pronya, liberating Bobruisk and Mogilev and entering Minsk. The scale of damage to the capital shocked everyone. Almost

every building had been ruined, with only a handful intact: part of Nemiga, the Opera Theatre and the House of Officers. People left their shelters to greet the

Soviet soldiers staring at the smashed concrete walls of former homes. Black-and-white photos depict families with children, horses and bags — as if all had happened

just yesterday...

The Academy of Sciences building was surrounded by barbed wire, as unexploded bombs often lay within such sites.

Luckily, Victory came — through joint efforts. Generals at railway stations saluted soldiers returning home. A regiment hairdresser attended to one soldier, who evidently wanted to look good for his relatives. One of the most striking images is that of a field near Tolochin, covered with hundreds of German helmets. These formed a hill similar to the Mount of Glory, devoted to those Soviet soldiers who won the most terrible war of the second millennium.

Mr. Ditlov died in 2009, at the age of 97. However, his legacy is valuable evidence of a generation which refused to yield to the enemy, of true heroes — with determination and a tremendous desire to win. 67 years after the war, we see young soldiers who smiled into an 'FED' camera in May 1945. Let's remember them forever. Thumb through family albums and take flowers to their graves. No doubt, they'd appreciate our thoughts.

## Significant differences still remain in life expectancy

Women outstrip men in life expectancy by 12 years

By Yelena Prusova

According to preliminary data, life expectancy in Belarus reached 70.6 years in 2011 — rising by 0.2 years against 2010. In line with the new national programme for demographic security, the figure is set to reach 72-74 years by 2015. "In Belarus, a huge gap exists between the life expectancy of men and women: a difference of 12 years last year (against a natural difference of 5 years)," noted the Deputy Chair of Belarus' National Statistical Committee, Yelena Kukharevich, speaking at a press conference. "Life expectancy in Belarusian men is 64.7 years — against 76.7 years in women."



Tatiana and Denis Slizkie with their daughters

She explains that men are more likely to die than women at all ages but this is especially noticeable during the years of employability. In 2011, the mortality rate fell to 14.3 per 1,000 (against 14.4 in

2010). In recent years, over half of all Belarusians have died from heart attacks. Meanwhile, 13 percent have died from tumours and 10 percent have died from reasons unconnected with illness. Death from external reasons is higher in Belarus than in developed European countries.

As Ms. Kukharevich notes, over 32,000 (a quarter of those who died) were of employable age, comprising over 80 percent men. She tells us that the Republic boasts one of the lowest infantry mortality rates in the CIS — just 3.9 per 1,000 last year (against 4 in 2010). "Belarus is approaching the level of developed European countries in this respect," she adds.

## Falcons on film



A falcon in Grodno

By Victor Terekhov

**Unusual documentary shot in centre of Grodno, with Red Book falcons in leading roles**

"The protagonists of the film are Belarus' most famous falcons: Alena and Stefan, which nest close to the Bernardine Monastery in Grodno. St. Alena's monument — which houses the nest — inspired the

naming of the female bird, while her mate is named after King Stephen Báthory, who always loved Grodno," explains the Head of APB-BirdLife Belarus' Grodno branch, ornithologist Dmitry Vinchevsky.

The film is being shot by famous director and cameraman Igor Byshnev. "Such films are popular at home, and abroad — at festivals. We aim to create a high quality product detailing the history of this bird; we'll feature scenes of knights hunting with falcons and will show how local residents treated falcons," Mr. Byshnev tells us.

On leaving Grodno, the team will move to Belarus' foremost 'falcon' city: Brest. They'll then go to the Minsk suburb of Machulishchi, which boasts a population of this rare bird. Shooting will conclude in mid-June and, after a month of editing, the film will be screened.