

Short childhood at Krasny Bereg

During Great Patriotic War, German fascists set up a 'collection point' for children, who were forcefully taken from their parents. The children were kept in Krasny Bereg village, in the Gomel Region's Zhlobin District, used as blood donors for wounded German officers

Today, the names of 15 underage prisoners-of-war have been revealed; the remaining 1,975 remain unknown. On June 28th, 2007, Krasny Bereg village hosted a solemn unveiling of a memorial complex dedicated to those children who fell victim to the Great Patriotic War. The memorial was designed by the creative workshop of Leonid Levin, Honoured Architect of Belarus and laureate of the Lenin Award.

Lyudmila Melashchenko lives near the memorial, so was able to watch it being built. She was the first guide and research officer, although her health prevents her from working today. However, the soul of the memorial has captured her heart.

Once, a group of pupils from Zhlobin arrived; despite having several strict teachers with them, the overgrown teenagers were unruly. Their teachers noted that they'd almost had to push them by force into the excursion bus. The youngsters didn't pay attention to me, just passing me by, some chatting on mobile phones, others nibbling sunflower seeds or blowing chewing-gum bubbles. I stopped them and found the necessary words to make them turn back. The first remark I heard

was: 'Make it quick — just five minutes, as we're in a hurry'. I responded: 'Boys, I can finish in three minutes; just let me know when I should stop. Agreed?' I took them on a tour for an hour and a half. They silently followed me through the memorial and, when they boarded their bus, they sat so quietly that their teachers couldn't believe their eyes.

Ms. Melashchenko, is it difficult to talk about the children's camp?

Yes. I've read somewhere that heroic deeds are not only those of brave attack but steadfast endurance. These were just children...

What did they withstand?

Krasny Bereg village had a 'collection point' for children — from various districts of the Gomel Region. In one book, I read that children from the Vitebsk Region were also brought there. They were sorted and those whose were fit were immediately put onto special trains. Many were brought to the estate where the German hospital for soldiers and officers was located, as the Germans needed fresh blood (from 8 to 14 year olds).

Why did they need such young blood?

I've asked doctors this question and they tell me that



Krasny Bereg's memorial complex presents true history of awful war

active hormonal development takes place at that age, so blood is especially health-giving and curative. Wounds heal quicker and the body recovers better. Those who survived Krasny Bereg have told us how the children were washed in a river in summer and in a banya (sauna) in winter, regardless of the weather; the Germans are distinguished by their orderliness and neatness. Then, the children were brought to a special room to have their blood drawn, placing their arm through a curtain, so they couldn't see the needle. Then, a special tag was hung around their necks.

Are there many who remember and can speak about this?

For a long time, few people knew that there were children's donor concentration camps. Veterans, partisans and heroes were the focus, having brought victory. Children were victims. There were five donor children's concentration camps in Belarus, with four located in the Gomel Region and one in the Minsk Region. Only one prisoner-of-war — Zoya Kazakevich — returned from Krasny Bereg camp; she has died now but had a miraculous escape. She was brought to Germany, where a German woman dragged her out of a pit half-dead and helped her recover.

What happened to those children whose blood was taken?

In most cases they died. Blood was taken several times, leading to the children losing consciousness and failing to wake. Only a few survived, but we have no exact figures. I do know that the Germans took 3,500 litres of blood from children at Salaspils concentrated camp. Child-donors were in a privileged position, receiving soup, sweets, tea and hot chocolate on their days of blood collection. Those who weren't fit were mercilessly killed.

How did you come across this topic?

I was already a pensioner and saw how the memorial was constructed. My husband went there to find a job as a guard and learnt that they needed an excursion guide. He

suggested it to me on 23rd December 2006, and, on the 26th, I conducted my first excursion for war veterans. I wasn't ready and was greatly worried. The only thing I knew at that time was that the memorial had been designed by Leonid Levin. I read newspaper articles to find out more and then decided that the veterans should be given the floor. They began to speak about their deeds and about the children...

There were hundreds of excursions, sometimes three a day. My heart wasn't strong enough, so I had to leave, but I managed to collect a great deal of material about the children's concentration camp and about the monument's creators during my days there. I cycled all over the neighbourhood searching for anyone who could tell me about those tragic events. I found several people and have stayed in touch with them. My husband also helped me, sometimes going on foot to a remote village in winter to congratulate a witness of those days on their birthday.

What are you doing now?

I think that, if we have such a monument, all pupils should be aware of it and should know whom it commemorates. I visit schools to give lectures and have donated materials to the district library, so that they can also speak to children. I've never refused to speak in public. Here, at the memorial, every detail is symbolic. It's vital to listen attentively, to look carefully and to ponder. Children usually cry; even adult men weep. You know, newly-wed couples have begun to arrive here. They take photos and read the names of children, selecting names for their future children. Such a tradition is being formed...

No novices to space research

Belarusian State University scientists participate in 'Hurricane' space experiment — to monitor and forecast natural and technogenic catastrophes

BSU Doctor of Physico-Mathematical Sciences, Professor Boris Belyaev, developed a photo-spectral system last July at the Department of Aerospace Studies. This was later delivered to the International Space Station, by a Progress-M-06M cargo craft. In July and August, cosmonauts used it to photograph the surface of the Earth, including a lake in the Gomel Region. Later, an under and above water space experiment took place (conducted simultaneously

at the Space Station and on the surface and on the bottom of Lake Baikal). The data received by cosmonaut Fiodor Yurlikhin is now being processed at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Geography Institute.

Scientists from the Belarusian State University are no novices when it comes to space research. For almost twenty years, they've been creating the means of optic remote sensing of Earth, while developing technologies for distant monitoring and data processing. This has helped define the scale of contamination during emergencies at industrial facilities and pipelines, while registering snow melting and sand storms.

Love of horses is best qualification



Training for horseback guards

By Darya Kovalchuk

Polotsk border guard launches first horseback patrols

Saveiki border post, near Lake Osveiskoe in the Vitebsk Region's Verkhnedvinsk District, along the Belarusian-Latvian border, has launched the use of horses to ensure se-



Work-mates

curity. The area boasts famous historical and ecological sites, which are to be guarded by horseback patrols.

The revival of the tradition of using horseback patrols was decided in early 2011, with the trial to last two years. It involves one frontier post within Grodno's border group and one within Pol-

otsk's. Time will show whether the experiment is worthwhile. Several factors are to be taken into consideration: economic feasibility, results in ensuring border protection and feedback from guards.

Lake Osveiskoe, which is within a specially protected territory, is safeguarded by Polotsk's border guards. Igor

Rachkovsky, the Chairman of the State Border Committee of Belarus, notes that military service in such a reserve is unique, as there are many remote areas which are not always accessible to vehicles.

Horse stables have been equipped at Saveiki frontier post, with border guards being trained in horseback riding and in how to look after horses, from the Republican Equestrian and Horse Breeding Olympic Training Centre and the equestrian school at Osveiskoe Farm. For several months, the border guards have been taught how to ride, with candidates mostly chosen from those born in villages, with zoo-veterinary or zoo-technical education and who love horses.

Trakehner horses and Belarusian draught horses have been chosen for the job, being tough, with strong feet and a friendly, calm nature.