

# Symbols which ever remain in our memory

40 years ago — in the autumn of 1971 — the Eternal Flame was lit at Brest Fortress-Hero Memorial Complex

By Viktor Korbut

June 1941

An unprecedented event occurred on June 22nd, 1941. At 3.15am, gun fire was launched upon Brest Fortress. At 3.45am, this led to an attack by the Germans, who faced strong opposition from the Volynsk and, especially, Kobrin fortifications. By the evening of June 24th, the fascists had seized the Volynsk and Terespol fortifications. The surviving garrison soldiers moved to the Kobrin fortification during the night, realising their inability to defend their other positions. About four hundred — led by Mayor Piotr Gavrilov — struggled against the Germans until June 30th. Even when the capital of Belarus, Minsk, had already been seized, Brest Fortress

continued its battle.

Writers Sergey Smirnov and Konstantin Simonov worked hard to popularise the memory of those heroes. In 1956, *Immortal Garrison* — based on Konstantin Simonov's script — was screened; it was later awarded an honorary diploma at the Venice International Film Festival.

## History in stone

The fortress by the Bug River gained its 'Fortress-Hero' title in May 1965. An artistic team then developed a memorial; only sculptor and architect Valentin Zankovich remains from that team. He recalls, "The memorial complex — which was launched in 1971 — was developed by a large team, headed by People's Artist and academician Alexander Kibalnikov. Two loaded lor-

ries were sent to Brest, for the all-USSR contest of projects. The jury was headed by Belarus' Architecture Minister, Vladimir Korol. He invited Ms. Kibalnikov and me to his office, telling us that we'd be making the fortress memorial and that he wouldn't forgive us if it lacked taste!"

"The creative team was given the whole floor of the Belarusian Museum of Great Patriotic War History to work in. The images currently seen on the memorial were born there," continues Mr. Zankovich. "The famous 'Bravery' monument [a soldier's head against the background of an unfolded banner] came to us accidentally. Mr. Kibalnikov wired from Moscow with a request to promptly send miniature figurines for the

Brest memorial. However, when the lorry arrived in Moscow, they had shattered. Only the gypsum head of a soldier survived. This was fixed to a granite lump and shown to the public, which produced an enthusiastic response. People saw it as a true symbol, so the soldier's large head was installed as a central part of the memorial. Now, the stone-cut image of a warrior against a flying banner symbolises both the fortress and our country."

Mr. Zankovich was recently entrusted to bring to life one of the ideas planned for realisation back in 1971. On June 22nd, 2011, a new sculptural composition was unveiled near the Terespol Gates: 'To the Heroes of the Border, and those Women

and Children who Stepped into Immortality with their Courage'.

## From Berestie to UNESCO

The Director of the memorial complex, Valery Gubarenko, aims to restore many sites from the original fortress, which were destroyed during the war. However, some remain from the times of ancient Brest, when it was known as Berestie.

Construction of the fortress began in 1833, on the site of the old town, following designs by engineer Karl Opperman. It is surrounded with 10m tall earthworks, with casemates, and five of the fortress' eight gates remain

visible: Kholmok, Terespol, Northern (or Alexandrovsky), Northern-Western and Southern.

On March 3rd, 1918, the Brest Peace Treaty was signed at the 'White Palace' — a former Basilian Monastery. On September 2nd, 1939, Brest Fortress was for the first time bombed by the fascists, with ten bombs damaging the building (it might be restored in the future). Not long ago, the Kholmok Gates were revamped, following old plans. They are a globally known symbol of the fortress, being depicted on the Belarusian National Bank's 50 Rouble banknote. Now, the fortress is applying to join UNESCO's World Heritage List.



'Bravery' monument embodies heroism of Brest Fortress' defenders during WWII

# Beautiful lady from Gomel

By Yelena Safronova

Anastasia Kharlanova of Gomel to represent Belarus at London's International Miss World 2011 Pageant

It was a pleasant surprise for Anastasia to learn that she'll be representing Belarus at this prestigious contest. Until now, her most outstanding title has been 'Second Runner Up' at *Miss Belarus 2010*, so participation at international level will be a novelty for her.

"Despite everything, I set myself small and large goals," she admits. "It's a poor soldier who has no desire to be a general. Participation in this contest is a great honour and offers me wonderful experience. It's doubly honourable, as I'll be representing Belarus. I'll do my best to reveal the diverse character of our country to the many millions in the audience."

One segment has the contestants appearing in national costume; Ms. Kharlanova is taking about 15 dresses to London (some rented from the National Beauty School and from



Anastasia Kharlanova presented in Gomel

Minsk and Gomel wedding salons). For the 'Miss Talent' nomination, she plans to play a Beethoven piano concerto which she calls close to her heart. "I had a long break in my piano playing, so am taking lessons every day," she smiles.

As a fifth year student at the Gomel State Technical University's Machine Building Department, she is keen on physics and mathematics and plans to become an engineer.

Her love for the exact sciences helps her during competitions, as she tends to be stoical and practical rather than allowing nerves to rule.

The *Miss World* Pageant is among the most popular worldwide, gathering 122 ladies for the November finals. It will be broadcast to 140 countries, with two billion viewers expected. It was first hosted by the UK in 1951, with Belarus joining in 2005.

# Bell ringing attracts to new church

By Nikolay Bestuzhev

Orthodox church opens in Bychikha agro-town (in Vitebsk Region's Gorodok District) where over a thousand people live

Bychikha-born Anastasia Ostitis now lives in Moscow, being a business woman and the President of the Equal to the Apostles Constantine and Helen Foundation. She was keen to help her native town, with the Foundation allocating money to build the church.

Almost all residents from neighbouring villages gathered to attend a divine liturgy to consecrate St. Aghia Anastasia Farmakolitra Church, taken by Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Filaret, the patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus. He awarded the patron with the 2nd class Order of Duke Daniil Moskovsky of the

Russian Orthodox Church, while also presenting a Holy Mother icon (brought from Athos) to the new church.

The solemn ceremony was attended by Russian business circles and heads of public charity organisations. After the consecration, Russian businessmen were invited to the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee to learn about the area's investment attractiveness. Guests learnt about existing projects in the region and those which show future promise, although the 'business forum' was of an educational character only. It primarily aimed to establish ties between the Belarusian region and potential investors.

Spiritual revival was also a topic for discussion, with Russian businessmen visiting the restored Assumption Cathedral and the Holy Resurrection Church in Vitebsk.