

News From Svetlana Village, Russia



Some Svetlanians and guests

Autumn 2004

Dear Friends,

It is always an enormous relief when the leaves begin to turn, and we are at last graced to see the stars again after the sleepless 'White Nights' of mid-Summer. For the Farmers and Gardeners it means that the season is drawing to an end, and their enormous efforts will begin to repay them with the fruits of the earth. For others it signifies that once again it is time to spare a thought for the approaching frost and snow.

The abiding memory of the Summer that has been is one of unremitting rain. That the Farmers managed to gather an unprecedented amount of hay in the few weeks of sunshine that we were granted us is a remarkable achievement. In contrast to previous years, there was a sense that we had the help we needed this year. That has made many things possible.

We have hosted another two workcamps of Norwegian builders this year, and between both them, and the on-going work of our resident builders, Sasha and Andrew Hoy (in his latest incarnation), great progress has been made on the new straw-bale house. Indeed, as of mid-september, it has been inhabited by its first two residents. The electrical work has been completed, the water and drainage pipes laid, and the finishing strokes are being put on the exterior paint work. Plenty of work still remains, however, on the interior. The kitchen, for instance, is still a tool room. And the construction of the unique Cockle Oven stove will have to wait, after the Scandanavian craftsman needed was twice denied a visa.

The daily life in the Village continues remarkably harmoniously, thanks to some wonderfully energetic young people from abroad, and the arrival of four very solid Russian coworkers over the course of the year. We hope that this firm foundation will carry us forward as we bid a sad goodbye to Luke, Katerina and Oliver after five years of herculean sacrifices.

Mark



Svetlana-Farm during at 3:30 am during White Nights

'All Aboard!'

Looking back on a whole summer, it is often a single moment which sticks in the mind. For myself this year, it was the glorious summer morning when we were picked up from the bank of the river that borders our land by a small, open self-welded boat. It would have been hard to believe that almost our entire Village could squeeze in there. In fact, we did leave one squeamish land-lubber on the shore.

The 'cruise' took us the 10 kms down-stream to where the River Syass opens up into Lake Ladoga. Like 35 Robinson Crusoes, we found a small uninhabited island, and set about making a fire. Having swum, sun-bathed and picniced for a good couple of hours, the more aware members of our party began to notice filthy black storm clouds gathering to the South.

In true Russian style, we quickly set to knocking together a make-shift roof over the boat out of a tarpaulin, a few branches and some bailing twine, all with the aid of an indispensable axe. We succeeded in loading up our happy, sun-kissed entourage just moments before the deluge began. Our return trip under the drumming tarpaulin sheet was even more magical than the initial trip in the sun. We disembarked under a freshly-cleared sky. If only all things in life worked out so fortuitously!



At Lake Ladoga

Football Match: Svetlana vs. Avrovo

After the potatoe harvest had been brought in with the help of some boys from the neighbouring village of Avrovo, we decided to organize for them a nice football-afternoon. So we started on a rainy Sunday morning to explore our village for a more or less plain and dry soccer field, which didn't contain too much cow and horse manure. Although it soon became obvious that the latter was not a realistic demand, both teams set about cutting the grass which was as high as some of our team mates.

After one hour of grass-cutting, (which was, incidently, a good way of warming up), the historical Svetlana – Avrovo game could begin. It soon turned out that the ground wasn't as dry as it looked in the beginning, and while the weather became progressively pleasanter as the match progressed, the field got steadily worse, presenting a real challenge for our international selection of star footballers. But nevertheless we were soon leading 3-1. Star of the game was our Ukrainian midfielder Sergey: he didn't really move much during the game, but when it came to a penalty against the guests he woke up for a short time and scored, although there were three goalkeepers in the goal! After one hour the author unfortunately had to leave the game because he had to milk the cows. A short time after he left, the guests scored several times...

After the match the two wet and mud-covered teams refreshed themselves with watermelons and sausages by the fire.

Stefan

An Important New Arrival

A Horse....and what do we need a horse for? Any horse-lover could rationally explain the case for a horse: as a substitute for a tractor in smaller tasks; grazing on land the cows can't find any more grass on; and because horse-riding is good for your health. But in the depths of his soul, he cannot understand how such a question could even be asked. The correct question would be, "How can we have lived until now without a horse?!"

But now we have one! Name: Venus. 4 years old. Trained to be harnessed and saddled. The former owner says she can plough (as yet untried) and harrow (tried: 2 hecs of field, and a plot of garden). Doesn't like monotonous work: will run away. Very Sociable, if the opportunity arises: will run away from the best field in order to loaf around the Village. In Nansen house, they will confirm that she popped in after one Bible Evening to check a number in the telephone directory, and make a quick call. For me, looking out the window and seeing her is no longer a joy. Absolutely not! I know who has to fix the broken chain, and lead the beast back again. And when she opened the latch on her stable door in order to chew some grass on the garden, I realised that she'll get by in life.

We still have something to remember from her first weeks in the Village. Anyone who has ever had anything to do with a horse will easily imagine: no saddle, no cart or sledge; but only a bridle and a young, over-confined horse, and all around just black ice. Gradually, however, we

acquired a saddle and instruments for the hooves (Thank You, Norway!), and a harness. Alexei made a cart, and basically had to re-train the horse to work from scratch. But thanks to his success, I began to feel that harnessed to the cart was a horse, and not a fire-breathing dragon. I am also grateful to Marta from Norway during that difficult time. We both rode her regularly, not because we wanted to, but because we had to...A big difference!

Venus is already a half year in the Village. On Birthdays, she ceremoniously carries the Birthday boy/girl for a ride. Sveta, who works in the kitchen, always leaves a tasty morsel for her, and asks if she'll like it. All summer, we transported grass for the cows. The cart was loaded by a team comprising Sanya, Minka, Sergei and Masha. When we had to once work with a tractor instead, the difference quickly became clear. Of course, the horse demands more attention and nerves, but a little quietness and the absence of exhaust fumes also means a great deal. Plus, Minka gets the chance to shout commands in an authoritative voice: 'Venus, Stand!'

The purchase of the horse was preceded by extensive conversations with the farmers. We were given one year to prove that the horse would earn its keep. However, they now seem to have got used to the idea that there now exists a mode of transportation somewhere in between a tractor and a wheelbarrow. Only in that way will she become calmer and more reliable. That will allow me to realise my longer term ambition to prepare the horse for riding therapy. That just leaves the need for a good riding hat. Perhaps one of our respected readers out there might have one or two lying around at home...?

Yelena



Our horse with Mark at his birthday

*“I work lots on the farm, but I’m not tired. Not a jot!
....Well...only a little bit”*

Minka

A Gardener’s Calendar

As a newcomer in February to Svetlana I immediately heard the mythology of the different events and seasons in the Svetlana year: the break up of the river, Easter week, spreading the manure on the spring fields, the hay cut, strawberry season, the first frost, life around the potato machine, the harvest festival, and the long winter. After a fulfilling but intense growing season I have finally come to that part of the year where I find myself standing around the potato machine with up to 6 other villagers and co-workers.

Hearing someone say machine, I think of dangerous gears where one may lose a finger and strange noises that demand ear plugs. When the day finally came that Luke announced it was time to get out the machine, I was a bit shocked to see a dusty yet well-built set of tables that consist of 3 levels with different size gaps in the boards for the different size potatoes to fall through. A true Svetlana machine. Yes, there are moving parts in the form of hinges to lift up the different levels, but those were just experiments that never worked anyway, and of course there is an abundance of strange noises, but really that is what the mythology of the potato machine is all about. It is a highlight in the social calendar. We reminisce about the events of the season. Vika tells us over and over again about her trip to Latvia in May with her beloved Sven, who is no longer a part of our lives here, and all of us sigh with longing at the mention of his name. Lenuchka names the different romances of the year, some real and some fictional, yet each time we find ourselves chanting ‘GORKA! GORKA!’ It is the traditional Russian chant at weddings to implore the couple to kiss.

In my warm memory I recall all of July’s mornings with so many of us on our knees hand-thinning the carrots and beets. Now Sveta in her absurd manner is comparing us all to the animals of the farm and somehow it comes back around to those who have been in and out of our lives this year. Yulya is a goose, Marthe is Johnny the dog, Mary was a chicken and Laura was a barn cat.

For a newer co-worker, Francesca, I find myself hinting at these other events, the grand and the not-so-grand in the Svetlana calendar. I tell her about the magic of the Russian Easter week. The strawberry season exceeds its hype and yes, the hay cut is full of long, sticky days followed by

10 p.m. dips in the river. I guess I need to provide hype for the uninitiated, but I don't think I will mention the week of manure spreading in the spring.

Aaron



Garden with greenhouses and herb workshop and earth cellar

The Farm, 2004

This year we had ten milking cows, three sows and two geese. There has also been a new acquisition of a horse. This is also the first year that we have been to the market consistently, which has raised our income noticeably.

There have also been new additions to our garage: a Combine, a new Hay Press, a Grass Cleaner and a Potatoe Planter. This equipment has made life easier for the Village as a whole, but the life of the Farmers remains as busy as ever!

At the moment (mid-October), all the crops are in except for the leeks. We had a very rainy season. The most dramatic moments came as we tested out the new equipment. The potatoe planter made a job for six people and five days into a job for three people and 2 two days. The rain ceased for one and a half weeks in July, and the pressure was on for the hay press, which

performed beautifully. We moved gracefully around our fields pressing dry hay virtually every day. Then the rain began again, and the action slowed. Towards the end of August there was a chance for the Combine to show its mettle. The weather was right, and the outer mechanisms of the combine worked faultlessly. There was a problem with the fuel distribution to the motor, which we have yet to solve. Pumping air out of the fuel line periodically slowed work down, but failed to halt it.

The hay is in; the grain is in, the potatoes are in. We still have some ploughing to do before the snow comes. Any farmers out there looking for an adventure will find an e-mail address on the back of this newsletter....

Luke

***** Luke modestly omits to mention that he and Katerina and little Oliver will be leaving us for Germany in November. On behalf of all the Coworkers and Villagers of Svetlana, we thank them for everything they have carried and achieved, and for their unwavering devotion to our Village over five eventful years!**



Our Farm with Garden in May this year

First Impressions

Здравствуйте! My name is Lukas Fischer. I'm a 20-year-old German, and already in charge of the dairy for two months by now. There, I process our milk into cheese (40-80 kgs per week, depending on the season), cottage-cheese (twice a week) and butter.

On Saturdays and Sundays we sell most of these products along with milk in Alexina (a little village near to Svetlana), and at other times on the market in Volchov as well. The latter depends on the number of cheeses already stored (right now about 95), their quality and their age.

Starting in early August with little experience (as regards Camphill life in general and the making of cheese in particular), the first weeks were tough! With work, language, people and the daily rhythm of life being all new to me, I faced an overwhelming amount of new impressions within a very short period of time, having little time to reflect.

Notwithstanding that, I enjoyed my stay from the very beginning. The Villagers displayed friendliness and warmth towards me upon my arrival, which instantly helped me feel at home. Furthermore, the thorough instruction I received regarding the different work processes and schedules allowed me to work on my own sooner than I anticipated. And, going to the weekend market gave me the feeling of experiencing a little bit of “normal” Russia.

The only thing I really missed in the beginning was a bit of spare time for reading!

Lucas



Lucas's precedor Sven and Julia in the cheese workshop

Michaelmas

At Bible Evening, we spoke about St George and Archangel Michael, who both fight against the dragon. We sang and painted Michael's cape. (On the day of the festival itself), Minka went into the dark cellar. His eyes had to adjust to the dark, and then he had to find the sword to conquer the dragon with.

We built a big dragon outside, and we had to go into its mouth to collect pumpkins. Daniel frightened us all. We put the pumpkins on a see-saw, until it outweighed a big stone on the other side. Then we had a big festive supper together. All our paintings hung on the wall. It started at 7, and finished at 8. We ate only the produce of our Village: bread, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, milk, cream cheese.

Okšana and Sergei

A Farewell To Arms

We may be a small farming community in rural Russia, but even here, the March of Progress can sometimes be heard. Well, the Limp of Progress, at least. Nonetheless, there was no mistaking the brave new future dawning on that glorious morning in early July, when our new pea-green Hay Press arrived in the Village. I say new, although the machine itself is a refurbished piece built 14 years ago. Made in the former East Germany, it was regarded in its day as the very cream of agricultural engineering in the Eastern Bloc. OK, I'll grant you, the concept 'Cutting Edge' is relative. However, for Svetlana, this represented a quantum leap after our antiquated Kirgistani Hay Press.

Such moments, however, are never without an element of melancholy for those familiar with the old ways of doing things. And so it was on this occasion. How can I explain...? You see, for years, the cry 'Syenakos!' (or 'Hay Cut!') has been, without a shadow of exaggeration, a veritable battlecry in our otherwise clockwork village existence. It is a word guaranteed to send a shiver of excitement, and not a modicum of fear, into the hearts of all true Svetlanians. You might be sat quietly at the lunch table, or nonchalantly weeding the carrot bed when you hear the call, but however the news comes, your heart clenches at its implications. You immediately realise that any plan or arrangement you might have had for the day, however important it may have seemed just two minutes ago, is now dead in the water. Instead, you can look forward to the roar of agricultural machinery; brutal physical labour; suffocating dust; and for those of us who suffer hay fever, catastrophic allergic reactions. All this for many a merciless hour in the baking sun, until it finally does the decent thing and sets. These are just some of the apocalyptic images that race through your mind as you sit on that green and pleasant carrot bed.

Not much to be nostalgic about, you might think. Well, I don't know....

It is difficult to convey to the uninitiated what so touches the heart of an old 'Syenakoser'. Perhaps part of it is the perverse pleasure of being pushed to the limits of physical endurance, and beyond. But it's much more than that. Unlike just running a marathon, you drag yourself to the Syenakos in the cause of what you might call the 'Greater Good'. And you stay with it hour

after hour, day after day, not to win anything, but simply because leaving your equally exhausted comrades is quite unthinkable. This is real Community-building!

Actually, as it turned out, our new pea-green Hay Press would appear to still leave plenty of scope to feel the Old Spirit. The ground-rules may have changed a little. Instead of getting a pitch fork through your foot, the new dangers include being clobbered on the head by a falling hay bale. However, judging by the rosy, happy faces of the Syenakosers this year, the important things still remain the same.

I mostly sat it out this year. The young folks seemed to have it largely under control, and besides, it's good to be able to get on with some of the hundred other tasks that demand your attention at any one moment here. Still, I couldn't help an envious pang every time a sultry summer evening was disturbed by the distant rumble of a tractor. Like an old war horse that hears the cannon-shot, I suppose.

Mark

A Few Thought From Lenochka....

My name is Lena. My surname is Verbina. I have just turned 36 years. My Birthday has already been. So now now I will have to wait until my next birthday in 2005 in order to turn 37! My Birthday is 28 August.

I arrived in Svetlana on the Harvest Festival. I came from my distant home town of Kronstat. I work together with Kiril, Brigitta, Francisca, Oksana, Natasha and Lena in the Bakery. What do I do in the Bakery? I bake cakes, cookies, buns; I make Muesli for Sundays. I work sorting potatoes (in the garden), helping Aaron, Luke and Francisca. I work also in the Herb Workshop, helping Irena Nikolaevna and Katerina. What do I do there? I prepare parsley, sage, dandelion and celery.

Minka, Sergei and Sanya work in the Farm. What do they do? They milk the cows, clear the muck and collect the grass. I also help them. Lucas and Masha work in the Cheese Workshop. What do they do? They make cheese, curd, yoghurt and brinza. But I help Stefan and Daniel and Brigitta, Aaron, Luke and Francisca.

Lenochka

A Few Recollections of a Childhood on the Ukraine

I am Sergei Anatoliavich Grachov. I grew up in a village called Tarasovka, close to Kiev on the Ukraine. My father, Anatoli Nikolaevich also lived with us. He had a two-storey house and a garden in which grew fruit trees (cherries, plums, gooseberries, raspberries,) and his own garden (tomatoes, cucumbers, and a great many vegetables!). With us, in September and October the fruit and vegetables ripen.

My Father was a member of the Union of Artists of the USSR. They knew Anatoli Nikolaevich Grachov, My Father. We had our own strawberries and flowers- tulips and roses. I have a God Father in Tarasovka called Stepan Michaelovich. My Father came to the Ukraine from Baku in Azerbaizhan. He died on New Year's Day, 1st January. Then I lived with only my Mother. We lived on Karochinka Street in Kiev. Then we moved to No. 27 Diputatskaya Street. Her name was Ludmilla Sigismundevna Grachova. She came to Kiev from a small village. She was Ukrainian by birth. She worked as an Engineer at the Granbitstroi Institute. There were three of us: my sister, Svetlana Anatolevna; my half-brother, Alexander Vladimirovich; and myself, the youngest.

My Mother died on 11th December. Then a lady came to me from the Social Services called Svetlana Anatolevna. We buried my Mother. Then my Sister came, and we marked the 9th Day, the 40th Day, and the anniversary, just as we had for our Father.

I didn't know that such a Village existed. I came to Svetlana Village on 23rd February. I became friends with Minka first, and then with Oksana. When Minka went on holiday to Norway, Oksana and I fell in love. I celebrated New Year for the first time in the Village. Now Oksana very much wants to visit to St Petersburg with me.

Sergei



Sergey with his Oksana

The Norwegian Connection

One of the pleasant experiences of this year was the renewed feeling that we are not alone in this vast country. You all know that the initial impulse to start Svetlana Village came from Norway, and, in particular, from Margit Engel, Lars Henrik Nesheim and Geoffrey Bass. And throughout our eleven years of existence, this connection has held fast, with regular visits by each of them.

Now the Norwegian clay and straw builders around Rolf Jacobsen, the architect, have also swelled the ranks of the Norwegian connection. This is truly amazing for a country of only five million people, for at times it seems as if a fair percentage of them are in our Village. The builders were to play a vital role in our almost completed Serafim House, which is built with alternative technologies. Due to their knowledge, our work has moved beyond the social and the agricultural work into traditional building with a modern thrust. When I wrote that we do not feel so alone, it is because people are visiting us not only to buy vegetables, milk, pigs, and other farm produce, but also, simply to take a second look at our new house.

The house swallows must also sense this because the number of their nests under the eaves of the Malinki House, Nansen House and Dostoevsky House have more than doubled in the past year. They not only build clay nests, but they live in social communities. So maybe in time we will not only speak of the Norwegian Connection- but the 'Global Connection'.

Andrew



Birthday-Party in front of the new house in April

Every Black Cloud....

You all know by now that Svetlana receives NO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT. You doubtless also realise that this tends to make life complicated! In a very real way, we rely on your help to continue our work.

However, here's a little good news....

- (1) Our Self-earned income rose 150% in 2003 as against the previous year! This was in no small way thanks to the enormous efforts of our farmers and gardeners who sell their vegetables, meat, dairy produce, grain and hay.
- (2) When account is taken of all the farm sales, plus the value of the farm produce consumed by the Village itself, we see that we covered a record 40% of our own needs in 2003!
- (3) 2003 was the first year to see significant donations to Svetlana from the private sector in Russia. This trend has continued into 2004.

In 2003 we were helped by exceptional factors. Such progress may not come so easily in the future. Nonetheless, it is the culmination of a long, slow trend of consolidation, otherwise known as "Pulling yourself up by your boot-straps".

'The Big Time'

Our little Village seems to have made a bit of a 'splash' in this huge land. The last year has seen a steady procession of journalists and TV cameras. Minka, in his capacity as the self-appointed 'President' of the Village, has been simply barraged by requests for interviews. First, there were two five-minute features on one of Russia's leading current affairs programmes, followed by a full-page colour spread in one of the major national newspapers, and then an appearance on the front page of the Moscow Times (to mention just a few).

As a result, we have been inundated by letters, calls and visitors from as far afield as Vladivostok in the far East to Moldavia in the West, from Uzbekistan in the South to Karelia in the North. In fact, it's just a mercy that our telephone works so seldom!

It can all feel a little overwhelming! In truth, we can rightly feel ourselves unworthy of such a fanfare....we'd probably be better to fix the tap that's been leaking for years, or attempt for once to make a meeting on time!

However, what was so interesting was that we ourselves did not invite a single journalist. In terms of real help for the Village it was also remarkable how little the whole media circus produced. Instead, one was just left with the over-riding impression that this was actually less about us than about Russia herself, and what she needed to hear at this particular point in time.

Svetlana Village Relies on YOUR Help!

Svetlana is the recipient of NO regular contributions from any governmental body or private foundation. Our continuing work is almost entirely reliant on the on-going generosity of private individuals....in short, YOU, the faithful readers of our newsletter !

SCANDANAVIA / EUROPE:

Payments can be made to accounts in Norway and Germany administered by friends of Svetlana in Camphill Vidarasen, 3158 Andebu, Norway.

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* Camphill Village Svetlana's fundraising efforts in the US are facilitated by the Camphill Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) organisation qualified to render tax-exempt receipts.

MANY THANKS !!!

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