

*News from Svetlana Village,
Russia*

Spring 2005



Dear Friends of Svetlana,

One never ceases to be impressed by the irrepressible ability of nature to every year produce Spring out of the seeming hopelessness of Winter. And this year all the more so, since we were experiencing heavy snowfalls until the very end of April. Somehow the nature spirits must have been reckoning on the late Orthodox Easter this year (1st May). So everything, it seems, is indeed right and just and fair in the world.

Winter began with a sad farewell to Svetlana veterans, Luke, Katerina and Oliver (the latter no less a veteran for his meager two years!). And yet, we soon discovered to our surprise that life goes on. We have been blessed this year with a large and lively group of young volunteers (both foreign, and

Russian, at last!), and perhaps that has helped to carry us forward. They have brought enthusiasm, creativity and a constructive questioning that has helped to reinvigorate many aspects of the life of the Village.

On a more practical level, we are also enjoying a period of development. A large donation from the USA in the Autumn earmarked 'For Capital Expenditure' has obliged us to make some very necessary investments that we might otherwise have continued postponing indefinitely. Overhauling the heating system in two of the houses, and re-insulating Dostoevsky House should both help to make life here a little more livable, and by a rare coincidence, perhaps little cheaper!

Looking forward to the summer, we can see two further major projects ahead. Later in May we shall host another team of Norwegian alternative builders. Besides adding some finishing touches to our new straw-bale house, they will begin a major over-haul and rearrangement of our herb workshop, to accommodate also a new bakery with traditional baking oven. And then towards August, we hope to host a party of Russian / German Waldorf students to commence building a much-needed garage.

And so with all the warmth and hope of a Russian Spring, let us wish you the traditional Orthodox Easter greeting: 'Christ is Truly Risen!'



The first Days in Spring

First Christmas

I have never celebrated Christmas before. Having said that, there are many things that I do now, which I have never done before! I bake bread; in the fall I made Pumpkin jam; and I rowed a boat across the river. And then I find myself taking part in a Christmas play. Indeed, playing not just anybody, but Eve, the first woman on Earth! It is a great responsibility to play such a role. It seemed to me that it would be straight-forward enough, but this turned out to be a little mistaken. As a result, in the early rehearsals, I even got quite upset if I didn't manage to perform as I wanted. However, I eventually managed to get into the role. I fell for the temptation of the devil, and managed to then tempt Adam, and then was left at the end of the day being blamed for everything!

Overall, it all seemed to work out. I was thrilled with the role I was allowed to play, and with the success of the play. I hope it was not my last role, or the last play to be performed in Svetlana.

Anya

The All-Night Easter service

For me, like I assume many other foreigners finding themselves in Russia around Easter time, attending an Orthodox church service was a major point on my "to-do list".

In spite of very little knowledge about Orthodox Christianity in general, I was aware of the distinguished position Easter holds within its religious calendar. I was therefore eager to seize this chance. And even though I felt slightly uneasy about watching something so dear and important to others from a tourist perspective, curiosity prevailed.

Just getting there proved to be an essential part of the experience. With the few seats in the car reserved for those staying the whole night, and the service beginning around 11-12 p.m., a long walk through the dark on a muddy road stood between the seven of us and the church. The estimated 90 minutes planned for the walk soon proved to be unrealistic, finding out that the term "short-cut" (we took one through the woods) is merely relative.

The thought that we were nowhere near the church, and thus unlikely to make it in time for the start of the service, soon challenged the good spirits we started out in. But knocking at peoples' doors late at night helped us back on the right track. Certainly, we could not have been more relieved when we arrived in time to join in the traditional walk around the church preceding the commencement of the service.

I was at once captivated by the old-Slavic songs, sang as we moved slowly onwards, and by the joy and expectation on peoples' faces. I had soon forgotten about our journey there. But having felt almost absorbed into the congregation outside, I felt the opposite

once we moved inside the church. Not being able to retain the mood, I noticed myself switching back into “observer mode”.

It took me some minutes to understand that the service had already started. Not that I wasn't told beforehand that we would stand throughout the service; people would come and go as it suits them; and that the atmosphere might differ greatly from what I'm used to. But still I expected a clear beginning to the mass, with the priest coming out of the sanctuary at some point to stay, not to go back every few minutes. I also thought he might switch from chanting the scripture in old Slavic to addressing the assembled directly in present-day Russian.

Realising that we were already into the service, I again tried to find my way into an Easter mood, but instead found myself marveling at the differences, feeling separated and alone amidst a lot of people. I mean that not in an emotional sense, but rather in terms of my ability to relate to what was going on around me.

On leaving church, I remembered our long journey as fast as I had forgotten about it going in. Still, it was a memorable experience!

Lucas



Easter Sunday Breakfast Table

A 'Travelling' Seminar is Established

In October 2004 a seminar took place in our Village with an experienced Anthroposophical Nurse from the UK. We covered health, several forms of sickness, and its treatment, as well as the temperaments and a series of painting sessions. This was the start of a 'traveling' seminar that combined participants from our Village, as well as the small Camphill villages in Estonia and Latvia. We came together again in January 2005, this time in Estonia, where, courtesy of Veronica van Duin, we were acquainted with the seven life processes, and had the chance to return to our childhoods with a wonderful series of social games. In March 2005, now in Latvia, we experienced the natural elements through eurythmy, and learnt a great deal about the biodynamic preparations.

However, it was perhaps not the widening of our knowledge that was the central aim of these seminars, but rather an acquaintance and cooperation between three of our communities.

I have recalled the warm relations between the coworkers and villagers, the healthy atmosphere in the villages, the cultural life, and a little of the workshop life that I had the chance to observe. It was a very satisfying acquaintance. Also, our walks in Tallinn and Riga left a vivid impression. Undoubtedly, these seminars gave something new to each of us: thoughts, experience and ideas. It brings new strength that allows us to make our village life more interesting, fulfilling and creative. I very much hope that they can continue into the future, and that others might have an opportunity to participate.

Aleksei



A Sunday Afternoon in Svetlana

Svetlana News now in the Internet!

As all major newspapers around the world we now offer you an up-to-date Internet service: Now you can read the latest news from our village directly on the Internet on: www.camphillsvetlana.org or download them (as pdf-file) and print them on your printer.

Beside of the Svetlana News you will find there alot of other material about Svetlana such as short films, music and hundreds of photos throughout the year 2004. Newspaper articles about our community from Newspapers such as The St. Petersburg Times and Konsomolskaya Pravda (in Russian) will be soon available (there's still a bug I have to fix).

For those who want to come here and help us go to 'Application Details', the others will find a link 'How to Donate'.

**With greetings,
Stefan**

'Once upon a Time.....'

The World of Fairy Tales: the mysterious land. It is to be found beyond the 'Three-times-Nine' land, in the Kingdom of 'Three-times-Nine'. One only has to wave a magic wand, and this miraculous world comes alive, full of sun and light, and forest smells and wonderful adventures. And this world is called 'The Doll Theatre'.

This is already the second year that we have run the Doll Theatre as an artistic workshop in Svetlana Village. Last year, two people worked there, this year four. We sew the dolls ourselves, make decorations, and then put on the performance. Oksana, Sveta, Masha and Vitalina work there with great pleasure.

This Easter we performed the Russian Fairy Tale, 'Ivan Tsareivich and the Grey Wolf'. The three months of preparation for this performance brought a great joy to all the artists and spectators.

In the future one could imagine creating a tradition in the Village of Sunday Fairy Tale Evenings, when everyone would come together, music would sound, the curtains open, and a little miracle begins....

Irena Leonid'yena

'The Kitchen', Nansen House (Reading Veronica Van Duin's book 'The Art of Living')

"Renewal of the home can bring a new social organism into being and influence the whole of society. Therefore it needs to be built on a profound comprehension of the processes that are active both in the universe and in the individual life forces."

We started reading Veronica van Duin's book after the return of our six Svetlana coworkers from Estonia, where a seminar was run by Veronica herself. Those who had been at the seminar wanted to work it though further. The rest of us chose to join up also to discuss this most delicate of questions. We read the book weekly. It was a great joy, as the author having had a long and varied experience of running a Camphill house, succeeded in raising the image of the simple housework in Camphill 'above the horizon', so to speak, overcoming the gravity of the routine. In conversation together, if you really succeed in penetrating to the real questions, you can begin to lift the reality towards the ideal, instead of always adjusting ones' ideals to the reality. It struck me that the very overcoming of the domestic routine in this way would be a fascinating and deserving challenge. I thought to give it a try, at least for a period.

My first, small experience of running a house coincided with this study. One reads, discusses, and draws on one's practical experience. But it was a real trial.

"Traveling from heights to depths and back again is also an expression from moving from the outer, the periphery, to the inner core of life. Nourishing is the most obvious of the processes to manifest this activity"

For a start, it was necessary to learn to cook. Despite my mature age, this is something I had never done before, not least for 17 people! On the whole, we cook with our own products, and one is ever conscious of the sheer amount of work invested in them. This presents a certain moral obligation to the cook. Thirty days of permanent stress in front of a stove, and you have made the first step...it even turned out tasty sometimes! There's still a long way to perfection, but a lunch of three courses is already a reality for me. That said, I'm not always on time, and being just five minutes late can add a lot to the stress!

Order in the kitchen is another area of experience. Sometimes the kitchen looked like the wake of a typhoon, the strength of which was proportionate to my desire to cook something special. My gratitude goes to Selina, for so often coming to my assistance in the moment of need. Generally speaking, our kitchen is in a state of constant movement, and is usually a mess. People are constantly drinking their favourite coffee, tea, or just stuffing themselves with tasty buns. Of course one would want a little order, in which everything has its place. We tried to observe the golden rule: 'Clear up after yourself, and a little more besides'. But so far it hasn't worked out so well. That will be our next step. The most solid element as regards the question of cleanliness is Lenchka's ability to wash up. To work with her is a real joy: everything is put in its own unalterable place, without haste or dissention. Lena in that sense has no rival.

All this time, I worked with Vitalina and Natasha. They can clean vegetables very well, and in order that they might receive real satisfaction from their work, I had to visit no small number of shops in the hunt for quality vegetable peelers. The kitchen is also a workshop, and good tools are no less essential! For many of our people, such as Vitalina, order is little short of a soul necessity.

“ In actual fact, nutrition is not the main part of nourishing. Food, and all that surrounds it, is only a very small part of that great creative process.... Our soul requires nourishing too. Most of us will know what is to dry up inside for want of soul food.”

Our living room is blessed with the sound of music regularly played in it, and its size allows us to receive the whole Village for all kinds of gatherings. But this not only enlivens our life, but it also presents its own questions. Is the homeliness of a house compatible with the idea of an ‘open house’? Can a dining room be transformed into a welcoming living room? Is there space in the living room for everybody during their free time? It seems that there is no consensus yet amongst the residents of the house. But at least we have started to think about these questions, to attempt to form a common view-point, and to create a common image of the home. Step by step, we are slowly mastering ‘the art of living’.

“ ...every time the world of truth is touched, the human spirit grows a little, fills out a little, and is truly nourished.”

And Veronica’s help here has been enormous!

Irena Nicolayevna



The Kitchen in Nansen House

Sergei

We celebrated 'Streyinye'. We bid farewell to the winter and welcomed the Spring. With Daniel, we sang a song about the spring.

Then we celebrated the important festivals of the Holy annunciation and then Palm Sunday..

Now the spring has come. The sun is getting warmer. Together with Minka, Lena Verbina,, Yulia, Vika and Sanya, we helped prepare firewood all winter with Mark.

The 1st May is the Workers' Holiday in the Ukraine (where I come from). The trees are in blossom. In the villages, the first cherries and plums appear. Spring comes earlier than St Petersburg. The birds arrive. The gulls fly in from Lake Ladoga. The 23rd April is Andrew's birthday. Spring comes earlier in the city than here.

Verbnaya Voskresyeny (Palm Sunday)

Early Sunday Morning. A retired Swedish bus on a Russian dirt road. The air is cold but the first flowers glance at us with yellow eyes from wet clay. April's still wondering whether to be winter's last breath, or the first burst of spring.

The bus is warm. In the very back sits a small Svetlanian group. We have been invited on an excursion to the Zelinetski Monastery by the local 'Invalids' Association'. From our seat there's a nice view of forty or fifty colourful heads wearing winter caps, or the traditional Russian scarves. With the exception of us, it seems to be mostly old ladies attending.

Bumpy roads, and a guide in the aisle jumping back and forth in Russian history. The road is getting narrower, the holes deeper. Vasya wonders what the drivers name is.

Then suddenly, in the middle of the forest, the bus stops. I cannot see any building around, and assume that this is the obligatory toilet stop. I'm mistaken. Instead of running behind bushes, people start collecting catkins. It's Palm Sunday, and the Russian Babushka remembers how palm branches were laid at the feet of a donkey entering Jerusalem.

Onion domes on the horizon as we approach the monastery. People walk in line on boards that have been put out to protect them from the mud. We slowly move towards the church entrance, and find that the service has already started.

A tiny choir communicates with a singing priest, and occasionally the congregation joins in. It strikes me that the singing gives a strong feeling of rhyme to the service. The atmosphere in the church is open. People constantly enter the room, while others leave. I

like this freedom of movement, and it seems possible to find your space without being disturbed. Beautiful icons decorate the walls; candles are lit.

Babushka is facing towards the priest, standing for hours: not leaning her weight on the one foot, then the other, as I find myself doing. Her feet are perfectly straight, her weight balanced. After half an hour, I can feel it in my back. Babushka is still standing. My three Russian friends, not always known to be the most patient, seem to be captivated by the singing and the rituals. Instead, it is myself and Francisca, another coworker from Germany, who suggest going outside to have a look around the area. Babushka is still standing, soft buds on her branches.

Beyond the monastery walls we find a garden. There's snow in the corners, and green greenhouses where tomatoes wait for summer. Vasya and Zulia sit down on a bench under a great tree. I take a picture of them, thinking that I'll soon see them working in our own garden.

Five happily-tired Svetlanians, eating 'bulochki' in the back of the retired Swedish bus. One of the old ladies wants to share her apple with us, and would not take no for an answer, as we are rocked home by the Russian dirt road.

Marthe



A Russian Monastery near Svetlana at full moon

Exclusive !!!

Interview with room-mates, Natasha and Lenchka

Lenchka and Natasha are little short of a Svetlana institution. Virtually inseparable, they share a raucous and irrepressible sense of humour. Comfortably ensconced together as always on the big settee in the living room of Nansen House, not even the most heartfelt entreaty for a little peace and quiet is likely to dampen their spirits.

Arranging an interview with these two formidable ladies was no mean feat, even for a dogged roaming-reporter like myself. These are busy people! All morning in the bakery; after lunch stacking firewood; and towards evening putting the finishing touches to their Dolls, in preparation for a puppet show scheduled for Sunday. I couldn't even get an evening slot, what with Village meetings, singing etc. So, having spent the best part of the week trying to get an appointment with them, I eventually tracked them both down at last only on Saturday morning, in between room cleaning and Lena's bath.

The room where they live together is tidy enough to shame your average young coworker. Lenchka runs a tight ship, and suffers no sloppiness on Natasha's behalf. As I entered with my notepad, I was greeted by Lena herself, a larger-than-life personality positively glowing with health and the after-effects of a leisurely bath. This is a lady that loves to sing and dance. If she feels like laughing, she roars; if she wants to cry, she howls. In any case, you're going to know how she's feeling! She shakes me vigorously by the hand. Natasha does likewise.

Natasha is almost 20 years her senior. She's a little unsteady on her feet, and very hard of hearing. She loves one song, and one song only: 'the one about the black cat', as she calls it. We rearranged the furniture so as to make the best advantage of Natasha's 'good ear', and Lena positioned herself as Natasha's 'translator', a role she automatically assumes. I knew my time was short, so I tried to get straight to the heart of the matter.

'Which of you came first to the Village?'

Natasha doesn't remember. Lena remembers coming one October with her elderly father, on the day of the Harvest Festival. She recalls meeting several people, all of whom have long-since left the Village.

At last, Natasha seems to have remembered her first visit being one August.

What year?

'1998! Four years ago'

'2001?' I suggest, perhaps a little pedantically.

But now for the real question. 'How do you feel about life in Svetlana?'

'Good!' affirms Natasha categorically.

And Lena...?

'Good!'

It's refreshing to meet people who know their minds!

My persistent series of leading questions continues to produce a lean crop of curt replies. Yes, Lena confirms, she did indeed sing in an Orthodox church choir while her mother was still alive. And they both confirm that they did indeed live before together in Dostoevsky House. Lena even freely volunteers a completely new piece of information. It seems that her father has refused to sit behind the steering wheel of a car since her mother's funeral!

Nonetheless, this is not shaping up into an easy interview. Even Lena's famously colourful vocabulary seems to be comparatively restrained today. Explaining how Vika used to keep them awake all night in Dostoevsky House crying for her mother, Lena employs only a few relatively mild expletives (the totally untranslatable 'pancake!', and 'conifer branches!'), but I am almost disappointed by the absence of her usual linguistic excesses.

Suddenly, a voice from downstairs is heard calling that Lena's Father is on the telephone. 'Coming!!!' she bawls in a robust holler calculated to resound throughout the house, not a meter from my right ear. She exits the room, an awesome mass of flesh and emotion.

All is quiet. Natasha and I try to struggle on a while. 'I understand you visit the Little House every Thursday for lunch...how do you like it?'

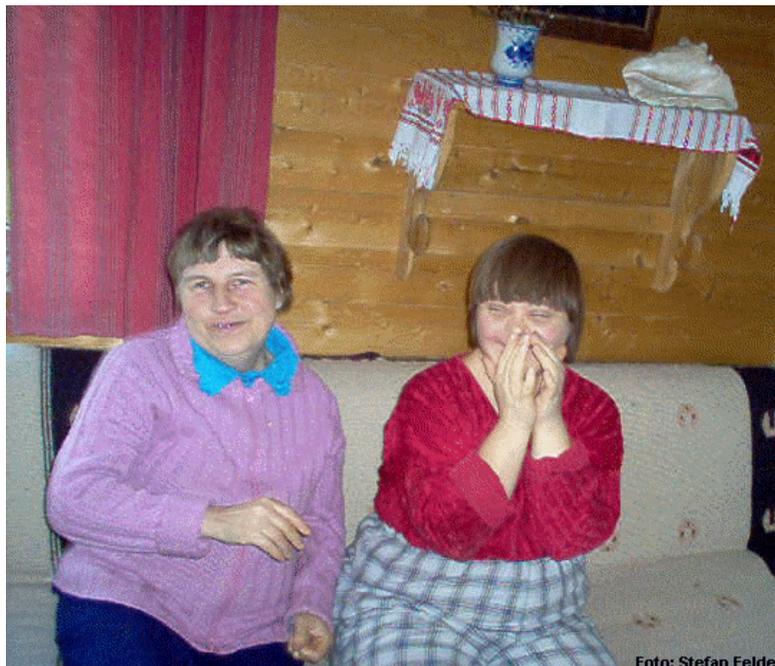
'Good'.

'And what do you enjoy most about living in Nansen House?'

'I've forgotten'.

The big lady's departure would seem to have brought our interview to a rather unceremonious conclusion.

**Special Correspondent,
'Svetlana News'**



Golden Girls Natasha and Lenochka

Minka...Reflections

Yulia and I used to work in the farm together. When we met, Sven worked with Yulia in the dairy. Now Lucas works with you, my dear Yulochka.

Yulia, you must congratulate me and Sergei on 23 February (Holiday of the Red Army, 'Defenders of the Fatherland' -Ed.). Kurlova A.V. (My Mother), Yulia's Mother and her Aunt Valia will make a very tasty festive lunch, with sausages and salami. Lena from Uzbekistan can come.

Yulia is mine!

Tips from the Locals

It isn't as true as it is believed that we here in Svetlana are so far behind in the ways of the world. We almost always have butter for our white bread, most of us have lamps near our beds and more often than not our village car is in working order. In the components that add up to a rich life, we are doing quite well, and although a little behind much of the western world in the mechanical advantage sector, certainly we are above par for rural Russia. But where there is gain, there is also loss, and I've an ideal to understand more fully this loss and a shovelful of turned dirt brings me closer.....

Having a garden is nearly obligatory for those who live in the Russian countryside. So when I find myself in the event of being outside of Svetlana, my eyes tune in to any detail that could help to produce more cucumbers or lighten our work load barring the roar of a combustible engine. I am far too yellow in the ways of Russia to understand the deeper workings of what is going on here, but I do know that these small gardens have filled an important need throughout the winding course that is Russian history, and I am quite proud when a local comments on the size of our potatoes or the sweetness of our carrots.

I have found the existence of our garden particularly peculiar in the middle of these old state farm establishments and among babushka half acre holdings. How is it that our garden has such rich earth where there wasn't a decade ago? The answers are easily found with a read through old svetlana garden journals and a glance at our compost area, but I hesitate to end it there. Yesterday morning I was in the garlic bed trying to figure the best way to get at the weeds that are growing up through the dead oat grass that we sowed last fall with the garlic. Although it served a purpose as a weed suppresser in autumn it is now a hindrance to our weeding efforts. Just shoveling it under isn't a workable option and leaving it lie won't let our hoes at the weeds growing strong through it. How do I get at those weeds and at the same time allow the dead oat grass to retain its function as a green manure?

A local friend of svetlana happened by this morning to pick up some hay and I mentioned my dilemma. He showed that by simply raking it away and placing it on the compost pile

keeps it in our system and allows my hoe's action to get at those weeds that are now starting; an obvious enough solution to me now but often enough those are the most genius.

It seems this is how our soil and the village grow richer. We are learning from our neighbors, those that have come before us, itinerants and from our own experiences, and we are putting that gained knowledge into our livelihoods. We are growing more a part of this landscape and into our own.

Aaron



Our Gardener Aaron in his Greenhouse

Sergei

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Some Svetlanians out for a walk

Oksana

My name is Oksana gregorevna Gen adyevna. I work in the bakery. I make bread and cookies and Waffles. There I got to know Natasha and Lenochka and Lena. I work in the Doll workshop, where we make dolls, and put on puppet shows for the Village.

I am 26 years old, from Volchov 2. I have a mum, a brother, a dog and two cats. I don't have a dad, or a babushka, or a dyedushka (grandfather).

We will soon go on a big excursion to Novgorod.



Oksana in the bakery

Drowning in Manure!!!

The catastrophic conditions of the manure-place and the road around the farm make most “classical” farm-work for villagers impossible (eg. taking out manure, bringing in straw etc.). Working condition within the cowshed are terrible, when liquid manure doesn't run off, because the liquid manure tank is filled up with rainwater. Furthermore there are a series of demands from the health inspectors regarding the dairy, which have to be fulfilled in the *near* future if we are not to lose our license to sell products at the local markets. This would mean a huge decrease of income.

Because on a farm everything is linked together, we cannot solve these problems piecemeal year by year. If we change one thing it will have immediate implications

elsewhere. The accumulation of these problems therefore demands a far-sighted solution based on a clear vision of how the farm should develop. In any case, the design and construction of the exiting farm and its surrounding has actually never been brought to a proper end!

We need to work out a solution for these problems. We want to emphasize that such a solution should meet only the most urgent demands, but – thanks to our significantly increased income through selling milk products in 2004 - we would be able to finance major parts of it, such as construction materials and wages for local workers. We already received support from friends in Norway and Finland in the form of advice on farm-organisation. With their assistance we worked out a general plan which would solve our most acute problems. This project will consist of a concreted place for compost, which will be located at a secure distance from the dairy, and which will prohibit liquid manure from running off into the surrounding water system. As a result of this, we will have to move the existing hay barn to the front of the cow shed.

What we will need now is support in the form of technical advice by an engineer (calculating and drawing of the plans) and by a ‘manager’ who could supervise the major construction activities (2-3 weeks) which are scheduled for June / July 2006. The levelling of the basement of the new barn could already be done in autumn 2005.

All this said, we would of course be very grateful for financial donations towards these major changes, because one is always loathe to spend one’s savings, as you never quite know what little surprises are waiting around the next corner here!

Our farm team will be grateful for any kind of support!



Our Farmteam: Yulia, Minka, Sergey and Sanya