

Annushka Appendix

Very often I watch Ray Mears Survival program on TV. I had a surprise to find one of his presentations to refer to the story "Annushka" I had written a few years ago.

I wrote about Annushka, living in a Russian village and their daily lives. When German Troops invaded Russia and destroyed small villages and killed the occupants, people fled into the deep forests before the enemy arrived. Ray Mears had gone in winter time to find out how they survived under those terrible harsh conditions. I had written about the villagers leaving, taking all they could from their farms. Besides their animals and clothes and food, they also took tools to build shelters.

To learn and see now the way they lived and coped, I think is worth mentioning.

They made a camp, a section for each family, where the women attended their chores, washing and cooking. The men went hunting to provide the meat. At night they all huddled into a shelter, which looked more like a cave, but had been made from wood, and was quite low and was covered with fir branches to hide their whereabouts. Ray Mears slept in there and said it was warm and dry. The camp and shelter had been specially made to show with the documentation. It showed how they cooked their meals. They made fires by rubbing sticks together and cooked their food in large bucket containers. It showed the vegetables which had been added. Ray Mears had not mentioned how they came to have vegetable there. But here I can help. I have a Polish friend, who lives nearby. She has written a book from when she was taken with all villagers by the Russians to be transported to the Finnish boarder to cut logs for tractors. In her book she told, that when trees were cleared, in the few summer months, the prisoners planted vegetables, mostly root vegetables, because they keep for a long time in sandboxes. They must have taken those inside, to use when needed, I can't imagine that these boxes were kept outside. The temperature went down to -60C.

If it had not been for the hardship the Russian refugees had to live with, it would have been very beautiful. The high snow on the ground and on the fir trees looked very picturesque.

The men, now partisans, were well equipped with guns and ammunition, and went often on Patrol. When German troops came close, they were ambushed before the camp would be detected.

Actually seeing all this, I was very glad my story can give now a more vivid picture of what happened.

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