

Right: Peter Martis and Emma Malmas visit the Second World War memorial. Below: memorial plate to Swede Andrei Utas



master we perish.' Five relief containers sent by the Swedish Red Cross literally saved the lives of people in the village.

Increasing political pressure from the Soviet Union under Stalin during the 1920s, militant atheism, starvation and economic problems compelled the majority of Swedes to consider emigration to Sweden. With the help of the Red Cross this was made possible in 1929, when the whole colony of 885 left the Ukraine. It seemed as though this was the end of the enclave. On 1 August that year, the Ukrainian Swedes arrived at Trelleborg during a period of economic recession and rising unemployment and were, understandably regarded as competitors. They did not fit in and their language was difficult to understand. Families were sent to different farms to learn Swedish agricultural practices, but in many cases they worked as maids, manual workers and cowmen. Yet despite these problems, most of the former enclave adapted to the Swedish way of life and settled in rural parts of southern Sweden.

But the enclave did survive, as in 1930 some 240 people decided to return to the Ukraine, which was then in the throes of the collectivisation campaign. People were directed to form collective farms and share their land and animals in a socialist structure. They set up a collective farm called *Shvedkompartiya* (Swedish Communist Party). The Stalinist period was particularly stressful for the Swedes. In the purges of the late 1930s, 22 men and one woman were arrested and never returned to the village. Others, like Margareta Norberg, who was arrested for baptising babies, spent a year in prison.

Political terror and complete isolation from the outside world combined to create a situation that, when the German army occupied the village on 25 August 1941, the troops were greeted as saviours. Some Swedes served in the *Wehrmacht* (Nazi German army) as translators and drivers. When the Germans had to retreat in 1943, the Swedish population of Gammalsvenskby was transferred to different camps in Germany. Swedes in the Western zones occupied by the Allies had the chance to emigrate to Sweden but those in the Soviet zone were sent to the Gulag camps in Vorkuta, north of the Arctic Circle.

When those who had managed to survive returned to their village, they found that many of their houses were occupied by Ukrainian and Russian settlers. So they often had to share their former homes. For example, Emma Malmas' house was divided by an inner wall into two parts and remains like this today. The village •

times of relative prosperity for Gammalsvenskby. Contact with Sweden and Finland brought visitors and books to the village. They helped them to learn standard Swedish. However, this 'golden age' did not last long. Some young families 'chose' to leave the village because of the lack of land, crop failures and compulsory military service. From 1904 to 1911, 16 families migrated to Siberia and another 16 to Canada. Young Swedes were sent to the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War and some never returned.

"Relief containers from the Swedish Red Cross saved the lives of people in the village"

The period following the 1917 Russian Revolution was probably the most disastrous for the enclave. Contact with Sweden was stopped by the First World War, and only partly renewed in 1921. Years of drought and famine followed. Between January and May 1921, 80 Swedes died from hunger. In despair Kristoffer Hoas, who had visited Sweden in 1899, wrote a coded letter to the Archbishop of Sweden. Using biblical quotes he sent the plea 'Master,