

Words from Dominique (Translated Text)

By D. Mouton

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Careful preparation for 2 years for what could have been an exceptional raid for my book titled "The Black and White Hell" turned literally into an indescribable hell...

My challenging raid started on December 18 and I reached Warsaw by December 20. This wasn't my first ATV expedition as I have already done a rally in snow from France to Poland.

My first negative incident happened on the night in a parking lot near Warsaw, Poland. I was confronted by 3 belligerent drunks who went up to my trailer and broke a headlight; as a result; I quickly got out of my sleeping bag and drove 30 km to get away. After which I forgot to switch my vehicle light off which caused a power failure. To reload my car battery, I used my ATV charger and from there, I was ready to continue my journey.

Because of this little technical problem, I was late for an appointment which was planned a year and half ago with an ATV rider and a great ATV forum friend (Mike PL) from Poland. We had an exceptional half hour of meeting filled with great friendship, souvenir photos, and a cup of coffee. We promised each other to meet again after my return from the trip.

During my first visit to the service station I took the opportunity to fill up completely (110 litres) and I got 450 km in from Białystok to Augustów where I had a first real meal in the city in front of a 4 stars hotel. I enjoy photography so I pulled out my camera and after 4 pictures my camera's flash failed to turn on. I took out my 220 volt charger and my converter, to my surprise, the charger wire under the freezing temperature (-15°C) couldn't unravel and was broken. To solve this problem, I decided to

leave the batteries in the pockets of my body suit.

My night in Lithuania was spent at the border post in the heavy goods vehicle parking lot, this campout allowed me to confirm my choice of ATV and equipments. In the morning it was -22°C and my clothing lasted longer than expected.

At 7 a.m. in the morning, my first task was to melt the snow to prepare my breakfast while my ATV warms up. A hundred kilometer will bring me to Kaunas City where I filled up my second full tank of gas. The gas pump attendant was so ecstatic standing in front of my ATV and offered me a coffee and tried to communicate with me by all efforts. My goal was to reach Riga City in the afternoon, where I made amazing encounters...

I then met Fifteen Union strikers who generously invited me for a fireside snack. I stood there for 2 enjoyable hours and they asked me to campout with them, unfortunately I had to continue with my journey to avoid any further delays.

My departure from Riga was under an extreme snowstorm and the weather reassured me my choice of helmet. In the middle of the night I was stopped by a custom mobile unit which was there to inspect my ATV, and then I stopped in an abandoned service station which protected me from the snowstorm. Regardless, I had a very restful night.

The next day I decided to travel along the Baltic Sea to take photos and visit fishing ports as well as the ice field which were very impressive to see deep-sea trawlers trapped by ice.

The welcomes from different cities are warming and surprising, one eye contact is enough to start delightful discussions in all languages. I had so many memorable conversations!

To avoid being alone for my lunch, I decided to go in a village where I met children practicing sledding, a little boy approached me to take a look at my

helmet... Seeing that I don't speak the same language he returned home to get his father to ask to look at my ATV. The father introduced himself as Robert, and asked about my goal and trip route, to visually explain, I showed him a map of Russia!

During this time the camp stove melted the snow from my meal and Robert kindly offered me a "kawa"; he returned to his house and came back with a big cup on a tray with biscuits and a box of Christmas chocolates; I felt a great friendship installing between us; I asked Robert for his son's name and it happened to be... Dominick! What a coincidence!

Dominick took the opportunity to try my helmet and I took a photo of him. I left the village with a sense of warmth and joy. My next stop was the charming town of Pärnym, where I went shopping in the Christmas market and again, a surprising encounter with a sports journalist that promised me an article in the weekly newspaper. After he made a few phone calls I found myself meeting with the whole journalist team. I stayed there for an hour to explain my wonderful excursion.

In the afternoon I arrived in the border town of Narva, the evening was spent in a park in the city. The next day, again under a snowstorm I felt a rush of anticipation as I was about to pass the Russian Customs! Everyone had sworn passing the border will take at least 7 hours, but thanks to my organization and administrative preparation, I succeed to cross this never-ending bridge in less than 2 hours! My ATV wasn't even searched.

When I left the customs, I stopped in the first insurer office to purchase a contract which is required when entering Russia. Luckily I did considering what happened next...

My first gas refueling in Russia I noticed one liter of gasoline is less than 60 cents of Euros. On the same evening I arrived at my hotel where I parked my ATV in a guarded parking lot. I stayed 3 days in this beautiful city to take photos and sight see. On Saturday morning, the great adventure

began as soon as I left the city and I was going into the taiga for 250 km of dreadful paths with 60 cm of snow. I was pleased with my TGB 550 ATV, but I think the smooth kevlar protected the crankcase well. The ATV started to consume a lot of gas so I decided to change course to find a gas station, to also have a meal there.

It was 5 p.m. and in the polar night I took the national road M18 next to Volkhov at about ten kilometers to Ladéga Lake. Barely 500m on this important road I came across a van drifting perhaps due to the heavy snow which led to a terrible collision between us. The accident threw me onto the ground and I became unconscious. When I woke up an Ukrainian driver spoke to me in all languages and told me in German that he was going to call for help.

At that time, a strong petroleum smell came from my body because the gas tank was damaged. I barely crawled onto a small hill where I stood waiting for an hour for rescue. I was then transported to a local clinic to receive first aid. I could have died during the accident.

This adventure stopped there with a huge unfortunate event, the only thing on my mind was my life and keeping in touch with my family.

The Russian hospital took 5 days to operate my five opened fractures. The wait with excruciating pain seemed like eternity.

I am thankful for my exceptional partners, thousands of supporters, as well as my family during the two years of preparation. Everyone was anticipating for a great success but everything went down the drain in less than thirty seconds.

Due to my stolen papers my insurance refused to let me return to France and I was forced to stay in these crummy hospitals for three more weeks.

My return journey to France was on January 14 by Air France airplane with a specialized doctor. I had to reoperate on my wounds and a long

stay-home period is needed for recovery.

In order to raise my spirits and to keep in touch with my fans, I have spent my recovery period writing my first book "Visa to Hell" which will debut during the world show of ATV.

I would like to thank all my partners including TGB/SIMA/LE MANS QUAD for their efforts in fulfilling this extreme dream and I hope that their motives remain intact and for me, I know in my deep thoughts that I am very lucky to be able to tell you about this journey.

To reillustrate my choice of ATV, I realized even after 1800 km with the TGB Blade 550, this ATV had an extraordinary handling on snow and ice; therefore I did not need to use my tyre stud let alone chains. The cold engine starting at -25°C had no problem; it's an expedition machine!