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LENINGRAD:

ABUSED

BESIEGED

SURVIVED.

The siege of Leningrad: 14 September 1941 to 27 January 1944

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pre-war

1. St Petersburg was created from scratch in the early 1700s to meet the requirement of Peter the Great that Russia should have a sea port to trade with maritime nations. So many tens of thousands of serfs died in its construction that it is known to this day by the locals as “the city of bones”. The city was built on the islands of the Neva Estuary. The Neva River flows from Lake Ladoga to the Gulf of Finland. The lake lies about 40km to the east of city. It is the largest lake in Europe, 17 600 square kms in area; 219 km long, with an average width of 83 km; and an average depth of 51m. The lake contains about 660 islands of more than one hectare; its water is fresh and yellow-brown in colour.

2. The city went through three name changes: Petrograd from 1 September 1914; to Leningrad from 26 January 1924; and back to St Petersburg in June 1991. It was the capital of Imperial Russia for two hundred years until 12 March 1918 when the Bolsheviks moved the capital to Moscow.

3. Leningrad was a city familiar with suffering. By 1941 it had endured:
 - three wars (the First World War, the Civil War between the Bolsheviks and the Whites and the Winter War with Finland of 1939-40);
 - two famines (one during the Civil War and the other following the collectivisation famine of 1932-3); and

- two major waves of political terror. As the poet Olga Berggolts said: “we measured time by the intervals between one suicide and the next.”¹

- 4. A census held on 17 January 1939 revealed that the population of Leningrad was 3 015 188. “This was one of the world’s great cities. Its population was double that of Los Angeles, larger than Paris and Rome.” By the end of 1942 the population had shrunk to 637 000 as a result of mass evacuations and deaths due to starvation, bombing, shelling, and the Terror. “The departures reduced Leningrad’s civilian population to that of a small provincial city.”²

- 5. During the Second World War it was the misfortune and tragedy of the city to be caught between two monsters, Hitler and Stalin.

- 6. “Pre-war Leningrad”, says the historian Brian Moynahan, “had been a pole of cruelty, the most defiled of all Soviet cities. Stalin had a particular hatred for the city, for the elegance of its buildings, rising in faultless lines of green and pink and blue stucco above the Neva River and the canals, for its independence of mind and its artistic genius, for its sophistication, so at odds with his own obscure origins in the stews of Tiflis, for its links with Trotsky. Leningrad was purged as no other.”³

Operation Barbarossa

- 7. In August 1939 the non-aggression pact was concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union. Less than a year later, Hitler began to take steps to renege on the pact. In July 1940,

¹ Main paper para 6

² Main paper para 72

³ Main paper para 23

shortly after the fall of France, Hitler ordered the commander-in-chief of the army, Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch, and his military chief of staff, General Franz Holder, to start planning the invasion of the Soviet Union. The plan for the invasion, codenamed Operation Barbarossa, was completed in December 1940. On 18 December 1940 in Directive 21, Hitler instructed his senior military commander to make preparations to crush the Soviet Union “in a quick campaign.” The launch date was 15 May 1941, later changed to 22 June 1941. The objectives were: first Leningrad, then Kiev, then Moscow. The “final objective” Hitler explained was to “erect a barrier against Asiatic Russia” on the geographic line “Volga Archangel”. “That the city [Leningrad] was named for the founder of Bolshevism increased Hitler’s lust to destroy it.”⁴

8. On 30 March 1941 Hitler told his generals that the war against the Soviet Union was a war of extermination: “commanders must be prepared to sacrifice their personal scruples.” Famine, they were told, would be a weapon of war. “This would clear out part of the population, leaving just enough to be slaves in a German-colonized ‘garden of Eden’. Hitler’s dream of *Lebenstraum* at last seemed within his grasp.”⁵
9. On 6 June 1941 Hitler told his army commanders that the commissars of the Soviet Union must all be killed. Hitler believed that the Ostland had to be opened up “to German soldier-farmers, and the business of securing that precious farmland by killing the racially impure, the vermin who stood in his way – killing if need be all of the Slavs, Bolsheviks, commissars, judges, doctors, teachers and especially, and first, all the Jews of Eastern Europe”. The preamble to Hitler’s ‘Commissar Order’ of 6 June 1941 “...advised officers that in this

⁴ Main paper para 7

⁵ Main paper para 8

campaign, 'handling the enemy according to humane rules or the Principles of International Law is not applicable.'"⁶

10. The invasion force consisted of 4 million German and Axis troops, 3350 tanks, 7000 field guns, over 2000 aircraft and 600 000 horses: it was "the largest invasion force the world had ever seen"; "the greatest military offensive in history". The German army was divided into three Army Groups: North, Centre and South.⁷
11. Army Group North had Leningrad as its ultimate objective. It faced the Red Army's Northwestern Army Group, which had lost its leadership in Stalin's purges of 1937 to 1939. Forty thousand officers were arrested, about 15 000 of whom were shot, including three out of the five marshalls of the Soviet Union; 15 out of 16 army commanders; 60 out of 67 corps commanders; 136 out of 169 divisional commanders; and 15 out of 25 admirals. Army Group North was disorganized; its forces were understrength and some soldiers had not even been issued with live ammunition.⁸
12. After the launch of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941, Army Group North "advanced with astonishing speed." One Panzer Corps advanced nearly 80kms a day: "The impetuous dash was the fulfilment of a tank commander's dream."⁹
13. Within three months, by mid-September 1941, Army Group North had reached the outskirts of Leningrad. On 24 September 1941 von Leeb "finally acknowledged that his now exhausted and overextended armies could advance no further, and requested permission to move onto

⁶ Main paper para 9

⁷ Main paper para 10

⁸ Main paper para 12

⁹ Main paper para 13

the defensive.” The decision was taken to concentrate on Moscow: both Army Group North and its Soviet counterpart thereafter became the “poor relations”.¹⁰

June to September 1941

14. During the three month period June to September 1941:
 - (i) Hitler spelt out his plans for Leningrad;
 - (ii) the evacuation of treasures, factories and people took place;
 - (iii) People’s Levies or people’s militia were formed;
 - (iv) Leningraders built defence works;
 - (v) the Terror continued;
 - (vi) Zhukov and Stalin issued chilling combat orders;
 - (vii) Shostakovich spoke on the radio.

Hitler’s plans for Leningrad

15. On 8 July 1941 General Halder noted in his diary: “Führer is firmly determined to level Moscow and Leningrad to the ground, and to dispose fully of their population, which otherwise we shall have to feed during the winter.”¹¹
16. On 16 September 1941 Hitler told the German Ambassador to Paris, Otto Abetz that “...Leningrad would be razed to the ground, it was the ‘poisonous nest’ from which, for so long,

¹⁰ Main paper para 40

¹¹ Main paper para 16

Asiatic venom had 'spewed forth.' The Asiatics and the Bolsheviks must be hounded out of Europe, bringing an end to 'two hundred and fifty years of Asiatic pestilence'..."¹²

Evacuations

17. On 1 July 1941 a heavily armed train left Leningrad for the Urals. On board were some of the most precious artifacts and paintings of the Hermitage. On 20 July 1941 a second train containing 700 000 items left. A week later another train containing 360 000 items from the Public Library left Leningrad.¹³
18. On 19 August 1941 the first train with evacuees from the Kirov ballet left Leningrad. A second followed. On 22 August 1941 the Philharmonia orchestra and staff left. "The Radiokom orchestra, was ordered to stay in the city as a reserve orchestra."¹⁴
19. According to official sources, 636 283 people were evacuated from Leningrad by 29 August 1941.¹⁵
20. By 30 August 1941 92 defence manufacturers and 164 320 of their workers had been moved out of the city to the Urals, where they resumed production.¹⁶
21. On 26 June 1941 the Leningrad soviet announced the evacuation of 392 000 children to the countryside with their schools, nurseries and children's homes, but not with their mothers. The

¹² Main paper para 17

¹³ Main paper para 14

¹⁴ Main paper para 15

¹⁵ Main paper para 21

¹⁶ Main paper para 21

first 15 192 children left by train on 29 June 1941. Three weeks later the children found themselves in the path of the advancing German army. In early August 1941 the authorities announced a second round of evacuations of children under the age of 14 and their mothers. A train that left at the end of August bound for Siberia carried 2 700 children. Instead of taking 3 days the journey took 7 weeks.¹⁷

People's Levy

22. By 7 July 1941 110 000 volunteers had been called up. They consisted of factory workers, skilled men, engineers, scientists, artists and students. On 16 July 1941 four more People's Levy divisions were created. Ultimately 41 446 volunteers served in the new "Guards Divisions". These men were unarmed and untrained. The Communist Party saw the volunteers as cannon fodder. An estimate at the time was that in the period June to September 1941 about 43 000 volunteers were killed, taken prisoner, or went missing. Anna Reid contends that that figure is too low. Possibly as many as 70 000 lives were lost in July and August 1941.¹⁸

Leningrad's citizens dig trenches

23. At about the end of July 1941 30 000 Leningrad citizens were given picks, shovels and spades to build defence works near Kingisepp. Nearly 100 000 were sent to the area around Krasnogvardeisk. "They dug 16 000 miles of open trenches, 430 miles of anti-tank ditches,

¹⁷ Main paper para 22

¹⁸ Main paper paras 18 and 19

and 395 miles of barbed-wire entanglements, and hauled the concrete and timbers for 5000 bunkers and gun pits.”¹⁹

The Terror

24. “One after another the men and women who had been in the vanguard of the Revolution were arrested, tortured, interrogated until they were induced to confess to some ‘crime’ and to denounce yet more of their comrades, and then shot.” Between January 1935 and June 1941 countrywide there were nearly 20 million arrests and at least 7 million executions in the Soviet Union. “In 1937-8 alone the quota for ‘enemies of the people’ to be executed was set at 356 105, although the actual number who lost their lives was more than twice that.”²⁰
25. Yezhov, the head of the NKVD, the secret police, issued Order 00447 on 31 July 1937 for the “repression of former Kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements.’ 75 000 were to be shot and 193 000 sent to the Gulag. “The operation was extended several times, and the executions were to swell close to the half-million mark.” Those at high risk in Leningrad were ethnic Poles, Germans, Finns, Latvians and Belorussians. Jews were much less so. “Even Yezhov’s original minimum target for Leningrad – 4000 ‘category 1’, to be shot immediately, with another 10 000 to be sent to the camps – exceeded the NKVD’s capacity to bury its victims in municipal cemeteries and on the Rzhevka artillery ranges.”²¹
26. On 25 August 1941 the NKVD provided a table of 2248 people who had to be arrested in Leningrad and deported divided into various categories, including priests, Catholics, former

¹⁹ Main paper para 20

²⁰ Main paper para 6

²¹ Main paper para 24

officers in the Tzarist army, formerly wealthy merchants, Kulaks and people 'with connections abroad.' One observer noted:

*"...about a hundred people waited to be exiled. They were mostly old women... These are the enemies our government is capable of fighting – and, it turns out, the only one. The Germans are at the gates, the Germans are about to enter the city, and we are busy arresting and deporting old women – lonely, defenceless, harmless old people."*²²

27. While the city was being bombed and shelled, and people were being killed and wounded, the round-ups by the NKVD continued, such as the detention of 3566 Red Army deserters. The NKVD evacuated its prisoners to labour camps.
28. "Terror, though particularly severe in the first twelve months of the war, continued throughout [Leningrad]. The large-scale deportations of July and August 1941 were followed by mini-purges in September [1941], November [1941] and March [1942]...By autumn 1942 more than 9500 people had been arrested for political crimes, about a third of them intelligentsia or 'former Kulaks, tradesmen, landowners, nobles and officials', the rest peasants and ordinary white-and blue-collar workers." If a prisoner was not executed, the probability was that he or she died of starvation in the winter of 1941-2."²³

Stalin and Zhukov's combat orders

²² Main paper para 25

²³ Main paper para 27

29. On 16 August 1941 Stalin issued Order 270. Those [Russians] who surrendered should be destroyed by all means possible, from the air or ground. Deserters were to be shot on the spot and their families arrested.²⁴
30. After Zhadanov, the Leningrad Communist Party boss, and Marshal Voroshilov, the army group commander, informed Stalin that Shlisselburg had fallen, Stalin ordered General Zhukov to fly to Leningrad with a note to Voroshilov, that read: “Hand over command of the Army Group to Zhukov and fly to Moscow immediately.” Zhukov and three other army generals took off from Moscow’s Central Airport on 13 September 1941.²⁵
31. Zhukov is regarded as the outstanding Soviet commander of the Second World War.²⁶
32. According to Zhukov’s memoirs, quoted by Anna Reid, he walked in “on a mood drunken defeatism. A meeting of Leningrad’s Military Council was in progress, being planned were the demolition of the city’s utilities and principal factories, and the scuttling of the [Soviet] Baltic Fleet. [Zhukov’s] improvisations included the adaption of anti-aircraft guns for point-blank fire against tanks, the secondment of sailors to the infantry, and the transfer of naval guns from the Fleet’s trapped ships to the weakest sectors of the front....He also transferred part of the 23rd Army...south to fight the Germans, and abandoned plans to scuttle the Fleet.”²⁷
33. On 17 September 1941 Zhukov issued this Combat Order:
- “Considering the exceptional importance [of the Pulkovo-Kolpino line], the Military council of the Leningrad Front announces to all commanders and political and line cadres defending the*

²⁴ Main paper para 29

²⁵ Main paper para 33

²⁶ Main paper para 34

²⁷ Main paper para 35

designated line that any commander, politruk or soldier who abandons the line without a written order from the Army Group or army military council will be shot immediately.”²⁸

34. On 20 September 1941 Stalin “...chipped in with orders that the troops around Leningrad should not hesitate, on pain of execution, to fire on Russian civilians approaching them from German lines:

‘It is rumoured that the German scoundrels advancing on Leningrad have sent forward individuals – old men and women, mothers and children – from the occupied regions, with requests to our Bolshevik forces that they surrender Leningrad and restore peace...

My answer is – No sentimentality. Instead smash the enemy and his accomplices, sick or healthy, in the teeth. War is inexorable, and those who show weakness and allow wavering are the first to suffer defeat.

Beat the Germans and their creatures, whoever they are... it makes no difference whether they are willing or unwilling enemies. No mercy to the German scoundrels or their accomplices.”²⁹

Shostakovich speaks on the radio

35. On 17 September 1941 Shostakovich spoke on the radio:

“I speak to you from Leningrad, at a time when there is heavy fighting with the enemy at the gates. I want you to know, comrades, that the dangers facing Leningrad have not emptied our lifeblood. Only now, we are not just citizens but defenders of our city, and we are all on combat duty.’

²⁸ Main paper para 37

²⁹ Main paper para 39

He told of his love of the city. *'this feeling has become more powerful and sharp...Leningrad is my country. It is my native city and my home. Many Leningraders know this same feeling of infinite love for our native town, for its wonderful spacious streets, its incomparably beautiful squares.'* It would always stand, with its grandeur and beauty, on the banks of the Neva, a *'bastion of my country', rich with the fruits of culture....*³⁰

The losses on both sides

36. The three months, June to September 1941, had seen losses on the Leningrad front on both sides which were staggering:
- Army Group North (German) had lost 190 000 men killed or wounded; 500 artillery guns and 700 tanks were lost;
 - the [Russian] Baltic Fleet and Northwestern Army Group had lost 214 078 men killed, missing or, mainly, taken prisoner and another 130 848 wounded, 4000 tanks, about 5400 guns and 2700 aircraft were lost.³¹

The siege

37. By 8 September 1941 Leningrad was cut off from the "mainland" by land and rail. For the next five and a half months the only access was via Lake Ladoga or by air.³²
38. On 28 September 1941 General Holder issued a memo to Army Group North which reflected the German "...change of strategy from ground assault to starvation and air raids."³³

³⁰ Main paper para 38

³¹ Main paper para 40

³² Main paper para 30

39. On 29 September 1941 Hitler issued this directive to Army Group North:

“Subject: the future of the City of Petersburg

The Führer is determined to erase the city of Petersburg from the face of the earth. After the defeat of Soviet Russia there can be no interest in the continued existence of this large urban centre. Finland has likewise shown no interest in the maintenance of the city immediately on its border.

It is intended to encircle the city and level it to the ground by means of artillery bombardment using every calibre of shell, and continual bombing from the air.

Following the city’s encirclement, requests for surrender negotiations shall be denied, since the problem of relocating and feeding the population cannot and should not be solved by us. In this war for our very existence, we can have no interest in maintaining even a part of this very large urban population.”³⁴

40. The siege lasted from 14 September 1941 to 27 January 1944, a period of 880 days, almost 2½ years. The siege has been described as “the deadliest blockage of a city in human history.” The most reliable estimate of the number of civilians who starved to death during the siege is 800 000: more than the total number of deaths, military and civilian (597 000) suffered by Great Britain and the USA in the whole of the Second World War.³⁵

41. “Mass starvation”, stresses Anna Reid, “was not an unforeseen, or regrettable but necessary by-product of this strategy, but its central plank, routinely referred to with approval in planning documents, and followed, once it set in, with eager interest by military intelligence...Ethical

³³ Main paper para 41

³⁴ Main paper para 42

³⁵ Main paper para 5

considerations do not seem to have prompted a single senior officer [of the Wehrmacht] to question a policy that directly led, not only foreseeably but deliberately, to the slow and painful death by starvation of about three-quarters of a mill non-combatants, a large proportion of them women and children.”³⁶

42. The bombing of Leningrad, by artillery fire during the day, and by bombing by night, took place throughout the siege. According to Soviet sources, about 69 000 incendiary and 4250 high-explosive bombs rained down on the city. The number of civilians killed by enemy fire was 16 747 and more than 33 000 wounded. On one day alone, 19 September 1941, 280 planes dropped 528 high-explosive bombs and about 2000 incendiaries on the city. From 4 September 1941 until the end of the siege the city was pounded by artillery fire on 272 occasions, for up to 18 hours at a time, with a total of 13 000 shells. Worst affected were those districts containing factories. “Fifty-four thousand residents and the whole or part of twenty-eight factories were moved northwards out of immediate firing range, into buildings emptied by evacuation.” On 13 October 1941 12 000 incendiaries were dropped on the city. But, unlike other Russian cities, St Petersburg “...was the showpiece and capital of the Romanov emperors. Its building materials reflected its status, granite or brick in the main, and its roofs were slate or tiles. It did not burn easily.”³⁷

43. Rationing was introduced in mid-July 1941: initially it was 800 grams of bread daily for manual workers, 600 grams for office workers, 400 grams for children and the unemployed, plus meat, fats, cereals or macaroni; and sugar. In early September 1941 the rationing was reduced to 500 grams for manual workers, 300 for office workers, 250 for dependents and 300 for children. By 20 November 1941 the ration fell to 250 grams of bread for manual workers and

³⁶ Main paper para 43

³⁷ Main paper para 44

125 grams (“three thin slices”) for everybody else, plus “derisory quantities of meats and fats”. And the rules forbade a productive worker from taking food home to someone at home who was “unproductive”, such as an elderly relative. “The biggest, inevitable, weakness of the rationing system was its vulnerability to corruption.” “As the siege progressed, one of the most widespread frauds became concealment of the death of a relative so as to be able to go on using his or her ration card until it expired at the end of the month.” The bodies were hidden in the house in the cold.³⁸

44. The total population of the city when the last road out of the city was cut on 8 September 1941 was an estimated 2,8 million civilians: 2,46 million in the city and 343 000 in the surrounding towns and villages. Soldiers and sailors came to about another 500 000: in total about 3,3 million. A survey done on 8 September 1941 found that all the available food would not last more than a month at current consumption levels: According to Anna Reid: “Failure to lay in adequate stores of food and fuel before the siege closed was due to the same lethal mixture of denial, disorganization and carelessness of human life as the failure to evacuate the civilian population. The most efficient and concerned administration could not have prevented serious shortage – emergency stocks did not exist, the trains were overloaded, the country’s most fertile regions in the process of being overrun – but error, muddle and above all the leadership’s refusal to face reality made the situation even worse than it need have been.”³⁹
45. To supplement the inadequate food supplies in the city itself the countryside within the siege ring was scoured for food: this was done “via a mixture of compulsory purchase, requisitioning

³⁸ Main paper para 51

³⁹ Main paper para 47

and 'donations'." This produced 4208 tons of potatoes and other vegetables, 4653 tons of meat, over 2000 tons of hay, 547 tons of flour and grain and 179 000 eggs.⁴⁰

46. Substitutes for flour in the production of bread were found:

- at the mills flour dust was scraped from walls and under floor boards;
- breweries provided 8000 tons of malt;
- the army provided oats which horses would have eaten;
- grain barges which had sunk were salvaged and the grain dried and milled.

These substitutions, and food rationing – the city's consumption of flour decreased from over 2000 tons of flour a day at the beginning of September 1941 to 880 tons a day by 1 November 1941.⁴¹

47. Then there were the substitutes for bread:

- flax-seed cakes used for cattle feed were turned into grey "macaroni";
- sheep guts from the docks and calf skins from a tannery were converted to "meat jelly".⁴²

48. As official sources of food ran out the city's inhabitants created substitute foods –

- The husks of linseed, cotton, hemp or sunflower seeds were pressed into blocks and normally fed to cattle. Grated and fried in oil, they were turned into pancakes, "...the elaborate preparation of which helped give the comforting impression of a real meal."
- Joiner's glue, made from the bones and hooves of slaughtered animals, was soaked in water and boiled with bay leaves "to make a foul-smelling jelly, which they forced down with the help of vinegar and mustard."

⁴⁰ Main paper para 48

⁴¹ Main paper para 49

⁴² Main paper para 50

- Semolina, used to clean white sheep skin jackets, was cooked up.
- Household pets were eaten or swapped so that their owners did not have to eat their own pets.
- Rye flour used to bake dark brown ration bread "...was cut with 25 per cent cellulose, as well as cottonseed-oil cake, cornflour and chaff."
- "People were mobilized to collect edible pine and fir bark."
- "City districts were each ordered to supply two and a half tons of sawdust a day. That, too, was considered 'edible'."
- "Rats were caught, skinned and eaten."⁴³

49. On 20 November 1941 the bread ration was cut: for "workers in priority plants and engineers...to 250 grams. Others – white collar workers, dependents, children, the old – had 125 grams. This was two slices of adulterated bread. Life was unsustainable at this level. ... The new ration was a death sentence, and both Zhudanov and Pavlov knew it."⁴⁴

50. On 22 November 1941 the ice on Lake Ladoga was thick enough to allow convoys of trucks to traverse the lake with supplies. Eight trucks made it across with 33 tons of supplies. "This was nothing in itself – the city had been consuming 3000 tons of food a day in normal times – but it showed what could be done."⁴⁵

51. On 25 December 1941 an increase of 100 grams "...in the daily bread ration of workers and 75 grams for others was announced. The effect on morale was astonishing...At the same time, a secret decision was made to provide privileged Party leaders and others with off-ration rusks,

⁴³ Main paper para 52

⁴⁴ Main paper para 56

⁴⁵ Main paper para 57

tea, cocoa, sugar and chocolate. The public knew nothing of this.” Nevertheless, on that day, 3700 people died of starvation.⁴⁶

52. The physical symptoms of starvation were emaciation, swelling of the legs and face, skin discolouration, ulcers, loosening or loss of teeth, and weakening of the heart. In starvation’s final stages “...sufferers resembled barely animated skeletons, with hollow stomachs, sunken cheeks, protruding jaws, and blank, frightening stares.”⁴⁷
53. An airlift began on 16 November 1941. Aircraft carried “...the most concentrated food possible: pressed meats, smoked fish, canned food, powdered egg, condensed milk, lard and butter.” But the transport aircraft, even though accompanied by fighters, were liable to be shown down by German fighters.⁴⁸
54. On 22 January 1942 Moscow’s State Defence Committee ordered the mass evacuation of Leningrad. “The Ice Road having frozen to the requisite thickness several weeks earlier, it was to take place by lorry, across Lake Ladoga...the programme...was to cover 500 000 civilians prioritizing women, children and elderly.” According to official figures ...”making an impressive, plan-beating total of 514 069 in less than four months. This takes no account, however, of those who died on the way, either during the crossing itself or in the trains that took evacuees onwards into unoccupied Russia...A wartime grave at Vologda, filled mostly with fleeing Leningraders, is estimated to contain 20 000 dead⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Main paper para 62

⁴⁷ Main paper para 65

⁴⁸ Main paper para 70

⁴⁹ Main paper para 72

55. There was no anarchy during the siege, "...but the city did suffer a crime wave, especially of theft and murder for food and food cards, and, most notoriously, of cannibalism." The thieves were often abandoned children, especially those too old – older than 14 years – to be placed in orphanages. "The pre-war penalty for food theft by officials was two to three years in prison, increased to eight years at the start of the siege. It now became death." But: "more crime must have gone unrecorded, since in the depths of the winter the police themselves partially ceased to function. By 10 February 1942 of the 2800 members of the NKVD, 152 had died of "exhaustion", 1080 were in hospital and "at least a hundred reported in sick each day."⁵⁰
56. In December 1942 police arrested 26 people for cannibalism; 356 in January 1942; 612 in February 1942; "...300 in March and April, then rose again slightly in May [1942] before falling off steeply through June and July. By December 1942, when the phenomenon finally tailed off, 2015 'cannibals' had been arrested in total." In their situation reports of December 1941 the NKVD referred to the following cases:
- a mother had smothered her 18-month daughter in order to feed herself and three older children;
 - a 26-year old man, laid off work; had murdered and then eaten his 18-year old roommate;
 - a metalworker and Party member and his son had killed two woman refugees and hidden their body parts in a shed;
 - an unemployed plumber had killed his wife in order to feed their teenage son and nieces;
 - an unemployed 18-year old had murdered his grandmother, boiling and eating her liver and lungs;
 - a 17-year old had stolen an unburied corpse and put the flesh through a table top mincer;

⁵⁰ Main paper para 73

- a cleaner had killed her one-year old daughter, and fed her to her two-year old.⁵¹

57. Some of the Russian soldiers resorted to cannibalism. This is the account of Yershov, senior supply officer to the 56th Rifle Division of the 55th Army: “One day Sergeant Lagun noticed that an army doctor, Captain Chepurniy, was digging in the snow in the yard. Covertly watching, the Sergeant saw him cut a piece of flesh from an amputated leg, put it in his pocket, re-bury the leg in the snow and walk away. Half an hour later Lagun walked into Chepurniy’s room as if he had something to ask him, and saw that he was eating meat out of a frying pan. The sergeant was convinced that it was human flesh...so he raised the alarm and in the course of the ensuing investigation it became clear that not only were the hospital’s sick and wounded eating human flesh, but so too were about twenty medical personnel, from doctors and nurses to outdoor workers – systematically feeding on dead bodies and amputated legs. They were all shot on a special order of the Military Council.” Yershov recounted another appalling story: that of Russian soldiers murdering food carriers, eating the food they were carrying, and then eating their bodies: “In early January 1942 the divisional commander started getting urgent calls from regimental and battalion commanders, saying that this or that group of soldiers hadn’t been fed, that the carrier hadn’t appeared with his canteen, having apparently been killed by German snipers. Thorough checks revealed that something unbelievable was happening: soldiers were leaving their trenches early in the morning to meet the carriers, stabbing them to death, and taking the food. They would eat as much as they could, then bury the murdered carrier in the snow and hide the canteen before returning to their trenches. The murdered would go back to the place twice a day, first finishing off the contents of the canteen and then cutting off pieces of human flesh and eating those too”.⁵²

⁵¹ Main paper para 74

⁵² Main paper para 78

58. A phenomenon which has not been emphasized before is the extreme cold of the winter of 1941/1942: "...even by Russian standards, the winter of 1941-2 was punishingly cold, and hit the German armies hard, most of all those of Army Group North. The sudden plunge in temperature, Hitler stormed over dinner at the 'Wolf's Lair' on 12 January [1942], was 'an unforeseen catastrophe, paralyzing everything. On the Leningrad front, with a temperature of 42 degrees below zero, not a rifle, not a machine gun nor a field gun, has been working on our side.' Aircraft were grounded, tank and truck engines refused to start and horses waded in snow up to their bellies, so that to move from place to place troops had to shovel a path by day along the route their transports were to take at night." On 24 and 25 January 1942 the temperature in Leningrad dropped to 35 degrees Celsius. On those two days 5369 death certificates were issued.⁵³
59. When spring came to Leningrad in 1942 the "... ice rotted and broke on the canals, snow slid in water-heavy avalanches off roofs and balconies, and the straight-sided piles of fire-fighting sand, their retaining planks long gone for firewood, thawed and crumbled...As the hours of daylight lengthened and ration levels increased, Leningraders began to emerge from their 'small radii', reacquainting themselves with the outside world and with ordinary human feeling." The postal service started to work again after March 1942.⁵⁴
60. "With spring, the snow began to melt. It revealed the corpses of those who remained in the streets. Some were cannibalised. "Severed legs with meat chopped off them", said the

⁵³ Main paper para 76

⁵⁴ Main paper para 81

clarinetist Victor Kozlov. “Bits of body with breasts cut off. They had been buried all winter, but now they were there for all the city to see how it had stayed alive.”⁵⁵

61. There was a clean-up campaign conducted in March-April 1942, which has been credited with “...miraculously preventing epidemics of the three classic famine diseases – dysentery, typhoid fever and typhus.” In reality, this was not quite true. Though the overall death rate fell from March onwards, in April [1942] numbers of dysentery and typhoid cases per thousand head of population were five to six times higher than a year earlier; and typhus twenty-five times higher.” The head of the Leningrad garrison reported in May 1942 that:

- only 7% of flats had running water;
- 9% had sewerage;
- up to a third of householders suffered serious lice infection;
- many courtyards were still covered in human waste;
- typhus ‘hotspots’ included recuperation clinics, children’s homes, railway stations, and evacuation points.⁵⁶

62. There was a “gardening drive”. Sleds and equipment were distributed. The “garden drive” created thousands of vegetable patches in parks, squares and on waste ground. “Major efforts were made to clean up the city and remove the accumulated filth which threatened an epidemic. The population was put to work planting cabbages on every square plot of ground...The Leningrad Soviet claimed that 12 500 hectares of vegetables had been planted in and around the city in the spring of 1942’.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Main paper para 82

⁵⁶ Main paper para 83

⁵⁷ Main paper para 84

63. Food was requisitioned in large quantities from collective farms within the siege ring: “As well as making their usual deliveries, via their collectives, to the state, peasants, were obliged to provide animals and seed corn to refugees in their areas, to subscribe funds to a tank column...and to ‘donate’ grain from their personal stores to the Red Army.”⁵⁸

The Seventh (Leningrad) Symphony

64. On 1 October 1941 Shostakovich and his family were evacuated by air from Leningrad.

65. The world premiere of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony took place in Knibyshev on 5 March 1942. “It was a triumph, the applause cascading on and on through the packed hall. The audience cheered and clamoured for the composer...From this moment, the symphony lodged itself in the emotional landscape of the war. It was sound of Leningrad, the defiance and courage of the besieged city set to music...The premiere was broadcast on radio stations across Russia.”⁵⁹

66. “The score [of the Seventh Symphony] had been copied on microfilm and flown out of Russia to Teheran. From there, it travelled by staff car to Cairo, then on to London, across Africa and round Spain and far out over the Bay of Biscay, beyond the range of German fighters based in France.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Main paper para 85

⁵⁹ Main paper para 80

⁶⁰ Main paper para 87

67. The Seventh Symphony was performed on 29 June 1942 by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood. “The Albert Hall was sold out. The audience, both in the hall and on BBC Radio was enthralled.” On 19 July 1942 Toscanini conducted the NBC Orchestra. “From its first note, American audiences received the Seventh with rapture. Millions listened to the broadcast from Radio City between 4:15 and 6pm EST...It was a triumph. Audiences and radio listeners thrilled to the music. There was a ten-minute standing ovation at the first concert performance on 14 August.” In its first season in the United States “...the symphony was broadcast by 1934 American radio stations, with 62 live performances.”⁶¹

68. At the beginning of July 1942 the score of the Seventh Symphony was flown into Leningrad.⁶²

69. The symphony was to be played by the Radio Orchestra, the Leningrad Philharmonia, the city’s leading orchestra, having been evacuated before the siege began. The Radiokom Orchestra had lost more than half of its members during the winter of 1941/1942. The survivors were “weak and traumatized.” At the first rehearsal in the Radiokom studio, an oboist, Ksenia Matus, got a shock: “of an orchestra of a hundred people there were only the fifteen of us left. I didn’t recognize them. They were like skeletons.” The conductor, Karl Ilyich Eliasberg, had to make up the numbers. “He found them in the remnants of the regimental bands. Nikolai Nosov, a former trumpet player in a jazz band with no experience of classical music, was horrified to find himself playing the symphony’s difficult trumpet solo.” The orchestra rehearsed every day, except Sunday. The rehearsals were short. One clarinet player described what happened during rehearsals: “We would start rehearsing and get dizzy with our heads spinning when we blew. The symphony was too big. People were falling over

⁶¹ Main paper para 88

⁶² Main paper para 89

at rehearsals. We might talk to the person sitting next to us, but the only subjects were hunger and food. Not music.”⁶³

70. On 9 August 1942 the symphony was due to be played commencing at 6pm. At 5.30 pm the Russian artillery was due to commence firing. “Crowds began flooding towards Art Square in the early afternoon. Soldiers came on foot from the front at Polkovo. A group of women from the Sverdlovsky plant walked to the hall straight after work...with a half an hour to go the Russian guns opened up...Artillery from a Guards regiment revealed their own position by using tracer shells to tempt the German unit into an artillery duel. Art Square and the rest of the city were spared...It was as well because the Square was overflowing.” Within the Philharmonia Hall, the “audience stood packed together” on the upper floor.⁶⁴

71. “After a few moments of silence, the Symphony began...
From the very first bars, Berggolts found ‘we recognised ourselves and the path we had trodden, the epic of Leningrad which had already become legendary: the ruthless enemy bearing down on us, our defiant resistance, our grief, our dream of a bright world...The orchestra was worthy to play this music, and the music was worthy of them, because it expressed all they have overcome’.”⁶⁵

72. Eliasberg said: “People just stood and cried and cried. They knew that this was not a passing episode but the beginning of something. We heard it in the music. The concert hall, the

⁶³ Main paper para 93

⁶⁴ Main paper para 94

⁶⁵ Main paper para 96

people in their apartments, the soldiers at the front – the whole city had found its humanity. And in that moment we triumphed over the soulless Nazi war machine.”⁶⁶

73. Moynahan ends the opening chapter, “Overture”, of his book, as follows:

“At heart of the Seventh was a howl of the evil washing over it. For the moment, that evil was taken to be exclusively Nazi. But Red Terror had preceded it and would outlast it. Shostakovich knew this as intimately as any. It had carried off close friends, and family, the tortured body of one dumped in a Moscow landfill, others broken in the Gulag Camps...

The difficult, complex and magnificent symphony, and the musicians who endured such horrors to play it, resisted and defied the inhumanity within Leningrad as well as without. It was Shostakovich’s Requiem for a noble city beset by the twin monsters of the century.”⁶⁷

1943/1944

74. In January and February 1943 two offensives were launched on the orders of Stalin. Both succeeded to the extent that a corridor was opened which allowed the construction of a new 34 kilometre temporary railway line into Leningrad.⁶⁸

75. The air raids and shelling of the city continued in 1943: “...alerts [of air raids] averaging slightly over one per night from January through to May. Shelling – worse in the first half of the year – became so accurate that tram-stops had to be moved. ...Barrages now fell into an established pattern, coinciding with morning and evening journeys to work.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Main paper para 97

⁶⁷ Main paper para 98

⁶⁸ Main paper para 99

⁶⁹ Main paper para 101

76. By the time the Soviet counter-attack on the German position began on 14 January 1944 the Soviet army had "...nearly twice as many men as Army Group North (1,24 million compared to von Küchler's 741 000), more than twice as many guns and more than four times as many tanks and planes. Gozorov now had overwhelming superiority of numbers, and controlled the air so thoroughly that Red Army lorries no longer bothered to shade their head lights at night." "At the start of the year [1944] the Germans had still closely enveloped Leningrad. ...In mid-January the Russians launched their long expected offensive to break the enemy's grip of Leningrad. Striking from the coast just west of the city, Gozorov's forces drove a wedge into the left flank of the German salient while Meretskov's drove a deeper one into its right flank near Novgorod. The initial penetrations produced the familiar illusion that the German forces were "trapped", but they achieved an orderly withdrawal, by stages to the baseline of the salient."⁷⁰

77. It is appropriate to end this paper by quoting Anna Reid:

"The end, like the end of all great conflicts, left a vast silence – the silence of hushed sirens and guns, of the never-to-return missing and dead, and in Leningrad's case, of grief and horror unexpressed, of facts falsified or left unsaid. It also meant new beginnings – militarily, of the great Soviet push to Berlin; privately, of facing up to loss and rebuilding lives; publicly, of repopulating and repairing an emptied and damaged city; politically, of new rounds of repression."⁷¹

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⁷⁰ Main paper para 104

⁷¹ Main paper para 105



LENINGRAD:

ABUSED

BESIEGED

SURVIVED.

The siege of Leningrad: 14 September 1941 to 27 January 1944

DRAMATIS PERSONAE⁷²

<u>Olga Berggolts</u> (1910-1975)	Poet of rare power. Arrested in the Terror in 1936, beaten during interrogation and lost the child she was carrying stillborn. During the Siege, her broadcasts on Radio Leningrad stiffened morale in the darkest months.
<u>Laurenti Beria</u> (1899-1953)	Head of the NKVD 1938-1953. A sadist and rapist. Suffered the same eventual fate, of torture and execution, as his predecessor.
<u>Karl Ilyich Eliasberg</u> (1907-1978)	Conductor of the Leningrad Radio Committee Orchestra. “We’ll never play this”, he said, when the score of the Seventh was flown into the besieged city. He had lost more than half his players over the winter [1941-1942], to hunger and shell fire, and only special rations kept him alive. The premier was a triumph.
<u>Kiril Meretskoy</u> *1897-1968)	General, army commander, and survivor. Arrested at the outbreak of the war, tortured, confessed, implicating others whom Beria had shot. Released from prison to command the Fourth Army outside Leningrad. Retook Tikhvin in December 1941, but failed to prevent the slaughter of the Second Shock Army on the Volkhov in the spring and summer 1942.
<u>Dimitri Dimitrievich Shostakovich</u> (1906-1975) ⁷³	Shostakovich was first given piano lessons at the age of nine by his mother. He wrote preludes for the piano at twelve. At thirteen, he left school to enter the Conservatoire: those who had passed through its doors included Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. He graduated in 1923 as a pianist. He wrote his first symphony as his graduation piece. He earned money as a concert pianist and as a cinema pianist. In 1927 he wrote his second

⁷² Copied from Moynahan p ix-

⁷³ This short profile is based on Moynahan pp4-16

symphony. He wrote his first film score in 1929, the year he wrote his first ballet. In 1934 his opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsenk*, was first performed, “a triumph”. In 1936 “Shostakovich fell from official favour.” Stalin attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth* at the Bolshoi on 26 January. Shostakovich was present. Stalin walked out after the third act. “Shostakovich went on stage to take applause. He was ‘as white as a sheet’ and bowed quickly. On his way to the railway station after the performance he told a friend: “I have a feeling that this year, all leap years, will be bad for me.” “He was right. For himself, and for the world.”⁷⁴ The opera was criticized in an editorial in *Pravda*. The music was said to be “perverted; bourgeois; fidgety, screaming neurotic.” The article accused the composer of “formalism”: “In theory, the term applied to works that strayed from ‘socialist realism’, failing to reflect the class struggle and the heroism of workers and peasants. The ‘formalist’ work, by contrast, was complex. Western-influenced, ‘modernist’, aimed at the elite and incomprehensible to the people.”⁷⁵ Ten days later Shostakovich’s ballet, *The Limpid Stream*, was attacked in *Pravda*. “Arrest seemed certain. The ballet’s librettist...was arrested...and shot by the NKVD...Shostakovich was never to write another ballet...For the moment, Shostakovich was bruised and fearful, but still free. He had⁷⁶ become ‘frail, fragile, withdrawn’.” In April 1936 he finished the Fourth Symphony. During rehearsals, the “Fourth disappeared...”, Shostakovich was told “to withdraw the work voluntarily, to avoid the need for administrative measures to be taken. Those measures, of course, could have

⁷⁴ Moynahan p31

⁷⁵ Moynahan p31

⁷⁶ Moynahan pp32-3

	<p>resulted in the liquidation of Shostakovich as well as his symphony...Nothing was heard of the Fourth until 1961.”⁷⁷ Shostakovich began writing the Fifth Symphony in April 1937 after recovering from a bout of tuberculosis. He completed the short score of the Fifth in Leningrad on 20 July 1937. The premiere was held on 21 November 1937 in the Philharmonic Hall.” Discretion, for Shostakovich, was the better part of valour.”⁷⁸ He commenced work on the Sixth and in 1938 wrote the score for a children’s cartoon film. He wrote his second Suite for Jazz for the new State Jazz Orchestra in 1938. The premiere of the Sixth Symphony took place on 5 November 1939, played by the Philharmonia in Leningrad.</p>
<p><u>Genrick Yagoda</u> (1891-1938)</p>	<p>Head of the NKVD 1934-36. In Leningrad with Stalin immediately after the murder of Kirov in December 1941 unleashed the Terror on the city. Supervised the show trials of the Old Bolsheviks before himself being executed after his own show trial.</p>
<p><u>Nikolai Yezhov</u> (1895-1940)</p>	<p>Head of the NKVD 1936-1938. Green-eyed, five feet tall, the “poison dwarf”. The Terror was at its worst in his years, and is still known as the <i>Yezhovshchina</i>, the Yezhov affair. As he had his predecessor tortured and shot, so he was dealt with by his successor.</p>
<p><u>Andrei Zhdanov</u> (1896-1948)</p>	<p>Became the absolute Party boss in Leningrad from the Kirov murder in 1934 until after the war. Zhdanov was interested in music – the secret police chief Laurenti Beria called him “the Pianist” – much to Shostakovich’s peril. He hounded the composer as a “formalist”, a charge that could lead to execution or the camps.</p>

⁷⁷ Moynahan p34

⁷⁸ Moynahan p62

MAIN PAPER

Introduction

78. Peter the Great wanted Russia to have a seaport so that Russia could trade with the maritime nations. The city was built in the early 1700s by conscripted peasants and Swedish prisoners of war. Tens of thousands of Serfs died during the city's construction, giving the city its nickname of "the city of bones". The city was called St Petersburg.
79. The city was built on the islands of the Neva Estuary. The Neva River flows from Lake Ladoga to the Gulf of Finland. The lake lies about 40km to the east of city. It is the largest lake in Europe, 17 600 square kms in area;219 km long, with an average width of 83 km; and an average depth of 51m. The lake contains about 660 islands of more than one hectare, its water is fresh and yellow-brown in colour.⁷⁹
80. For 200 years, between 1713-1728 and 1732-1918, St Petersburg was the imperial capital of Russia. On 1 September 1914, after the outbreak of WWI, the Imperial Government changed the name of the city to Petrograd, to remove the German words "Sankt" and "burg". On 26 January 1924, five days after Lenin's death, Petrograd was renamed Leningrad. In June 1991 the city was renamed St Petersburg.
81. On 12 March 1918 the Bolsheviks moved the capital from St Petersburg to Moscow.

⁷⁹ "britannica.com"

The siege

82. The siege of Leningrad lasted from 14 September 1941⁸⁰ to 27 January 1944, a period of 880 days,⁸¹ almost 2½ years. The siege has been described as “the deadliest blockage of a city in human history”,⁸² “the longest and most pitiless in modern history”.⁸³ The most reliable estimate of the number of civilians who died from starvation during the siege is 800 000.⁸⁴ Geoffrey Roberts wrote:⁸⁵ “During the siege 640 000 civilians died of starvation or disappeared during the course of forced evacuations, many into the icy waters of Lake Ladoga during the winter of 1941-1942. More than a million Soviet soldiers lost their lives fighting in the Leningrad region.” According to Manchester and Reid “[b]y the time the siege was finally lifted in January 1944, more than a million bodies filled communal graves, more fatalities than British and American casualties, military and civilian combined, for the entire war.”⁸⁶ In their work on the Second World War, H P Willmott, Robin Cross and Charles Messenger state: “It has been estimated that during the 900 days of the siege, about 1 million of Leningrad’s citizens died from starvation and other privations or German bombardments.” They estimate that the total number of deaths, military and civilian, suffered by Great Britain and the United States in the war was 597 000.⁸⁷

83. Leningrad was a city familiar with suffering. By 1941 it had endured:

⁸⁰ Brian Moynahan, *Leningrad : Siege and Symphony* (2013) (“Moynahan”) p1.

⁸¹ Martin Gilbert, *Second World War* (1989) (“Martin Gilbert”) p495; Anthony Beevor, *The Second World War* (2012) (“Beevor”) p548.

⁸² Anna Reid, *Leningrad : The Epic Siege of World War II, 1941-1944* (2011) (“Anna Reid”) p1.

⁸³ Beevor p204.

⁸⁴ Anna Reid p418.

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin’s General: The life of Georgy Zhukov*, p134 (“Geoffrey Roberts”).

⁸⁶ William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion, Winston Churchill, Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965* (2012) (“Manchester & Reid”) p521.

⁸⁷ *World War II* (2004), DK, p152, p303.

- three wars (WW1, the Civil War between the Bolsheviks and the Whites and the Winter War with Finland of 1939-40);
- two famines (one during the Civil War and the other following the collectivisation famine of 1932-3); and
- two major waves of political terror. “One after another the men and women who had been in the vanguard of the Revolution were arrested, tortured, interrogated until they were induced to confess to some ‘crime’ and to denounce yet more of their comrades, and then shot. Between January 1935 and June 1941, there were just under twenty million arrests and at least seven million executions in the Soviet Union. In 1937-8 alone the quota for ‘enemies of the people’ to be executed was set at 356 105, though the actual number who lost their lives was more than twice that.”⁸⁸

“For someone like the poet Olga Berggolts, the daughter of a Jewish doctor, it was not unduly melodramatic to state that ‘we measured time by the intervals between one suicide and the next.’ The Siege, though unique in the size of its death toll, was less a tragic interlude than one dark passage among many.”⁸⁹

Operation Barbarossa

84. In July 1940, shortly after the fall of France, Hitler ordered the commander-in-chief of the army, Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch, and his military chief of staff, General Franz Holder, to start planning the invasion of the Soviet Union. The plan for the invasion, codenamed Operation Barbarossa, was completed in December 1940. On 18 December 1940 in Directive 21, Hitler instructed his senior military commander to make preparations to crush the Soviet Union “in a quick campaign.” The launch date was 15 May 1941, later changed to 22 June

⁸⁸ Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World* (2006) p210.

⁸⁹ Anna Reid p2.

1941. The objectives were: first Leningrad, then Kiev, then Moscow. The “final objective” Hitler explained was to “erect a barrier against Asiatic Russia” on the geographic line “Volga Archangel”. “That the city [Leningrad] was named for the founder of Bolshevism increased Hitler’s lust to destroy it.”⁹⁰

85. On 30 March 1941 Hitler told his generals that the war against the Soviet Union was a war of extermination: “commanders must be prepared to sacrifice their personal scruples.” Famine, they were told, would be a weapon of war. “This would clear out part of the population, leaving just enough to be slaves in a German-colonized ‘garden of Eden’. Hitler’s dream of *Lebensraum* at last seemed within his grasp.”⁹¹

86. On 6 June 1941 Hitler told his army commanders that the commissars of the Soviet Union must all be killed. Hitler believed that the Ostland had to be opened up “to German soldier-farmers, and the business of securing that precious farmland by killing the racially impure, the vermin who stood in his way – killing if need be all of the Slavs, Bolsheviks, commissars, judges, doctors, teachers and especially, and first, all the Jews of Eastern Europe”.⁹² The preamble to Hitler’s ‘Commissar Order’ of 6 June 1941 “...advised officers that in this campaign, ‘handling the enemy according to humane rules or the Principles of International Law is not applicable.’”⁹³

87. The invasion force consisted of 4 million German and Axis troops, 3350 tanks, 7000 field guns, over 2000 aircraft and 600 000 horses: it was “the largest invasion force the world had ever

⁹⁰ Moynahan p86.

⁹¹ Beevor p189.

⁹² Manchester & Reid p371.

⁹³ Moynahan p109.

seen”;⁹⁴ “the greatest military offensive in history”.⁹⁵ The German army was divided into three Army Groups, North, Centre and South.

88. Army Group North had Leningrad as its ultimate objective. Its commander was Field Marshall Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, “who had led the breaching of the Maginot Line.”⁹⁶ In command of the Sixteenth Army was General Ernst Busch; in command of the Eighteenth Army was General George von Küchler; “fresh from victory in France”.⁹⁷ Panzer Group Four had with its commanders two of “Hitler’s most brilliant tank commanders.”⁹⁸

89. Army Group North faced the Red Army’s Northwestern Army Group, which had lost its leadership in Stalin’s purges of 1937 to 1939. Forty thousand officers were arrested, about 15 000 of whom were shot, including three out of the five marshalls of the Soviet Union; 15 out of 16 army commanders; 60 out of 67 corps commanders; 136 out of 169 divisional commanders; and 15 out of 25 admirals.⁹⁹ “Most officers were shot within twenty-four hours of arrest. In every group the aim was to kill the most senior, especially those who had fought in the Revolution or who had known the party before Stalin owned it.”¹⁰⁰“Nor was it only the most senior who were purged. The victims included aircraft designers, tank commanders, a keeper of cavalry horses in Central Asia, an ex-cook who was the head of army catering on the Pacific coast, and the conductor of an army band”.¹⁰¹ Northwestern Army Group “...was in the midst of traumatized reorganization and redeployment. The bulk of its forces were understrength,

⁹⁴ Anna Reid p46; Manchester & Reid p375; Liddell Hart p188; Gordon Corrigan, The Second World War (2010) (“Gordon Corrigan”) p149.

⁹⁵ Moynahan p84.

⁹⁶ Anna Reid p41.

⁹⁷ Anna Reid p41.

⁹⁸ Anna Reid p41.

⁹⁹ Anna Reid p16.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Johnson, A History of the Modern World, from 1917 to the 1980s, (1983) p301.

¹⁰¹ Moynahan p44.

and some had not even been issued with live ammunition.”¹⁰² Army Group North’s “...radio operators picked up repeated Russian appeals for orders from Moscow. “We are being fired on, what shall we do?” One reply was “you must be insane. And why is your signal not in code?” The purges had destroyed any sense of initiative in the Red army. Its commanders waited for commands from the Kremlin. None came.”¹⁰³

The period 22 June 1941 to 14 September 1941

90. “The whole outlook of the war was revolutionized when Hitler invaded Russia on June 22nd, 1941 – a day before the anniversary of Napoleon’s invasion of 1812. That step proved as fatal to Hitler as it had to his forerunner, though the end did not come so quickly.”¹⁰⁴ Operation Barbarossa was launched: “with numbers, leadership, surprise and air superiority all on its side, Army Group North advanced at astonishing speed.”¹⁰⁵ Generalleutnant von Manstein’s LVI Panzer Corp advanced nearly 80kms a day: this ‘impetuous clash’, he wrote later, ‘was the fulfilment of a tank commander’s dream’.¹⁰⁶

The Hermitage and other treasures

91. On 1 July 1941 a heavily armed train left Leningrad for the Urals. The train was pulled by two engines; consisted of 22 goods coaches, and 2 passenger coaches, an armoured car, and flatbeds for anti-aircraft guns at either end. On board were some of the most precious artifacts and paintings of the Hermitage. Included in the paintings were works by Rembrandt,

¹⁰² Anna Reid p41.

¹⁰³ Moynahan p88.

¹⁰⁴ BH Liddell Hart, History of the Second World War (“Liddell Hart”) p177.

¹⁰⁵ Anna Reid p42.

¹⁰⁶ Beevor p193.

Breughel, Van Dyck, Holbein, Rubens, Gainsborough, and El Greco. Amongst the precious items were a marble Venus acquired by Peter the Great and “its superb collection of diamonds, precious stones, crown jewels and ancient artefacts of gold.” “The train was bound for Sverdlovsk, once Ekaterinburg, on the eastern slopes of the Urals. Many objects were stored in the basement of the Ipatiev Mansion. It was ironic that the treasures of the Romanovs should have been placed here for safe-keeping. This was the dynasty’s deathplace. Here...the Bolsheviks had kept Nicholas and Alexandra, their children... and the family doctor, chambermaid, cook and valet. They murdered them all on 17 July 1918, in the cellar rooms that now housed the crates from the Hermitage.”¹⁰⁷ On 20 July a second train containing 700 000 items in 422 crates left. A week later another 360 000 items left the Public Library on the Nevsky, including a Gutenberg Bible, Puskin’s letters, Mary Queen of Scot’s prayer book and the world’s second oldest surviving Greek text of the New Testament.¹⁰⁸

92. On 19 August 1941 the first train with evacuees from the Kirov ballet left Leningrad. A second followed. On 22 August 1941 the Philharmonia orchestra and staff left. “The Radiokom orchestra, was ordered to stay in the city as a reserve orchestra.”¹⁰⁹

Hitler’s plans for Leningrad

93. On 8 July 1941 General Halder noted in his diary: “Führer is firmly determined to level Moscow and Leningrad to the ground, and to dispose fully of their population, which otherwise we shall have to feed during the winter.”¹¹⁰ “The treatment of prisoners made clear that this was a campaign like no other. The Germans took just under 800 000 Russian prisoners in June and

¹⁰⁷ Moynahan p103.

¹⁰⁸ Anna Reid pp60-61; Martin Gilbert p206; Moynahan p112.

¹⁰⁹ Moynahan p116-7.

¹¹⁰ Martin Gilbert p209; Anna Reid p50.

July [1941], rising to 3,3 million by the end of the year. Some of these – commissars, Jews, Bolsheviks, were shot out of hand. Of the rest, perhaps two million died in the first few months, of starvation, forced marches, disease and neglect.”¹¹¹ ...For their part, in the first six months of the war, the Russians shot 95 per cent of the Germans who fell into their hands. Some were tortured and disfigured.”¹¹²

94. On 16 September 1941 Hitler told the German Ambassador to Paris, Otto Abetz that “...Leningrad would be razed to the ground, it was the ‘poisonous nest’ from which, for so long, Asiatic venom had ‘spewed forth.’ The Asiatics and the Bolsheviks must be hounded out of Europe, bringing an end to ‘two hundred and fifty years of Asiatic pestilence’...”¹¹³

People’s levy

95. On 27 June 1941 Andrei Zhdanov, the Leningrad Communist Party boss, had asked his supervisors in Moscow for permission to form a People’s Levy (or ‘People’s Militia’ or ‘People’s Volunteers’). The next day the Chief of Staff, General Georgi Zhukov, approved a plan for seven volunteer divisions. The first three divisions, in total about 31 000 volunteers, were called up from 3 to 18 July 1941. Men from the same factories served together. Altogether about 67 000 factory workers signed up, including skilled men, engineers, scientists, artists, and students. Of the 97 000 men enrolled up to 6 July, 20 000 belonged to the Communist Party and 18 000 to its youth wing, the Komosol. By 7 July 1941 110 000 volunteers had to be placed in barracks, equipped and trained. “In this the authorities failed miserably...” The First Division had artillery, machine guns and a few sub-machine guns, but it had no anti-aircraft

¹¹¹ Moynahan p110.

¹¹² Moynahan pp109-110.

¹¹³ Martin Gilbert p235.

guns, its mortars had no sights, and some of the rifles were 40 years old. The Second Division also had no anti-aircraft guns and no automatic weapons except for one machine gun. The Third Division had half its designated artillery, no armoured shells, no grenades, no Molotov Cocktails, no mortars, no gun oil for rifles. The Second Division arrived on the front on 13 July 1941. “The result was near-universal panic and confusion. Unarmed, untrained, exhausted by night-time marches and sleepless days hiding from air-attack, volunteers fled or fell into captivity in vast numbers. The Party saw the volunteers...as cannon fodder... brought to battle, the volunteers’ lives were thrown away in the most punitive fashion.”¹¹⁴ The Third Division was sent to man fortifications near Leningrad on 15 July 1941.

96. On 16 July 1941 the High Command ordered the creation of four more People’s Levy divisions. Ultimately 41 446 volunteers served in the new divisions. They were called “Guards Divisions”. They were even worse equipped than the other People’s Levy divisions, eg the 3rd Rifle Regiment of the First Guards Division had 791 rifles, 10 sniper’s rifles and 5 revolvers for 2667 men. Volunteers were meant to receive 16 hours’ training but in reality they received even less: there were not enough instructors (one per 500-600 soldiers, according to one report) and they did not have enough weapons or ammunition to learn with. “Training was again abysmal or non-existent... The new divisions were thrown into the same bloodbath as their predecessors... In between bouts of carnage, volunteers set out summer thunderstorms in half-built trenches, wet and hungry.” The remains of the People’s Levy were wound up on 19 September 1941 and by the end of that month those that remained were absorbed into the Red Army. An estimate at the time was that about 43 000 volunteers were killed, taken

¹¹⁴ Anna Reid pp82-83.

prisoner or went missing in the period June to September 1941. "This is almost certainly far too low."¹¹⁵ Possibly as many as 70 000 lives were lost in July and August 1941.¹¹⁶

Leningrad's citizens dig trenches

97. At about the end of July 1941 30 000 Leningrad citizens were given picks, shovels and spades to build defence works near Kingisepp. Nearly 100 000 were sent to the area around Krasnogvardeisk.¹¹⁷ "They dug 16 000 miles of open trenches, 430 miles of anti-tank ditches, and 395 miles of barbed-wire entanglements, and hauled the concrete and timbers for 5000 bunkers and gun pits."¹¹⁸

Evacuation of citizens and factories

98. A census held on 17 January 1939 revealed that the population of Leningrad's fifteen urban districts was 3 015 188. "This was one of the world's great cities. Its population was double that of Los Angeles, larger than Paris and Rome."¹¹⁹ According to official sources 636 283 people were evacuated from Leningrad by 29 August 1941. About 2½ million civilians remained behind in the city, "plus another 343 000 in the surrounding towns and villages within the siege ring. Of those who remained in the city 400 000 were children and over 700 000 non-working dependents. By 30 August 1941 92 defence manufacturers and 164 320 of their workers had been moved out of the city to the Urals, where they resumed production."¹²⁰ They

¹¹⁵ Anna Reid pp85-88.

¹¹⁶ Anna Reid p73.

¹¹⁷ Martin Gilbert p217.

¹¹⁸ Moynahan p104.

¹¹⁹ Moynahan p170.

¹²⁰ Anna Reid pp 95-96.

were taken out by rail on a total of 282 trains, the two largest manufacturers of tanks being relocated 1200 miles (1931.2 kms) to the east.¹²¹

99. On 26 June 1941 the Leningrad soviet announced the evacuation of 392 000 children to the countryside with their schools, nurseries and children's homes, but not with their mothers. The first 15 192 children left by train on 29 June 1941. Three weeks later the children found themselves in the path of the advancing German army. In early August 1941 the authorities announced a second round of evacuations of children under the age of 14 and their mothers. A train that left at the end of August bound for Siberia carried 2 700 children. Instead of taking 3 days the journey took 7 weeks.¹²²

Reign of Terror

100. "Even as it was being terrorized by Hitler from without, blockaded, bombed, shelled, so it was being terrorized by Stalin from within. The purges that had defined pre-war Leningrad – the arrests, interrogations, 'confessions', executions - were continuing.

Pre-war Leningrad had been a pole of cruelty, the most defiled of all Soviet cities. Stalin had a particular hatred for the city, for the elegance of its buildings, rising in faultless lines of green and pink and blue stucco above the Neva River and the canals, for its independence of mind and its artistic genius, for its sophistication, so at odds with his own obscure origins in the stews of Tiflis, for its links with Trotsky. Leningrad was purged as no other."¹²³

¹²¹ Martin Gilbert p230.

¹²² Anna Reid pp96-100; Moynahan p101.

¹²³ Moynahan p8.

101. Yezhov issued Order 00447 on 31 July 1937 for the “repression of former Kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements.’ 75 000 were to be shot and 193 000 sent to the Gulag. “The operation was extended several times, and the executions were to swell close to the half-million mark.”¹²⁴ Those at high risk in Leningrad were ethnic Poles, Germans, Finns, Latvians and Belorussians. Jews were much less so.¹²⁵ “Even Yezhov’s original minimum target for Leningrad – 4000 ‘category 1’, to be shot immediately, with another 10 000 to be sent to the camps – exceeded the NKVD’s capacity to bury its victims in municipal cemeteries and on the Rzhevka artillery ranges.”¹²⁶
102. On 25 August 1941, the secret police, the NKVD,¹²⁷ provided a table of 2248 people in Leningrad who had to be arrested and deported divided into various categories, including priests, Catholics, former officers in the Tzarist army, formerly wealthy merchants, Kulaks and people ‘with connections abroad.’ One observer noted:
- “...about a hundred people waited to be exiled. They were mostly old women... These are the enemies our government is capable of fighting – and, it turns out, the only one. The Germans are at the gates, the Germans are about to enter the city, and we are busy arresting and deporting old women – lonely, defenceless, harmless old people.”*¹²⁸
103. One of the victims was the father of Olga Berggolt. They were Jewish. She was a popular poet. He was a doctor. He was summoned to police headquarters at midday on 1 September 1941. He was ordered to leave the city by 18h00. But he managed to stay on until the spring of 1942, when he was deported, half-starving to Siberia. Berggolt wrote in her diary: “Papa is

¹²⁴ Moynahan p54.

¹²⁵ Moynahan p55.

¹²⁶ Moynahan p54.

¹²⁷ People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

¹²⁸ Anna Reid p107.

a military surgeon who has faithfully and honestly served the Soviet Government for twenty-four years. He was in the Red Army for the whole of the Civil War, saved thousands of people, is Russian to the marrow...It appears – no joke- that the NKVD simply don't like his surname."¹²⁹

104. "Terror, though particularly severe in the first twelve months of the war, continued throughout [Leningrad]. The large-scale deportations of July and August 1941 were followed by mini-purges in September [1941], November [1941] and March [1942]...By autumn 1942 more than 9500 people had been arrested for political crimes, about a third of them intelligentsia or 'former Kulaks, tradesmen, landowners, nobles and officials', the rest peasants and ordinary white-and blue-collar workers."¹³⁰ If a prisoner was not executed, the probability was that he or she died of starvation in the winter of 1941-2.¹³¹

105. While the city was being bombed and shelled, and people were being killed and wounded, the round-ups by the NKVD continued, such as the detention of 3566 Red Army deserters. The NKVD evacuated its prisoners to labour camps. A survivor of a shipment of prisoners across Lake Ladoga on 9 October 1941 described the voyage:

"By evening the hold [of the ship] had been packed full. It consisted of three compartments: one for men, holding about 3000 people, one for women, of whom there were about 800, and a small corner into which were squashed 200 German prisoners of war. From time to time a gasping prisoner would try to climb a little way up the steps, so as to gulp some fresh air. Shots would swiftly follow, and the unfortunate, having swallowed lead along with air, would tumble back down again.

¹²⁹ Anna Reid p108.

¹³⁰ Anna Reid p304.

¹³¹ Anna Reid p306.

As the night progressed conditions got even worse. To start with we had been pressed tight, but at least it had been possible to stand on the floor. Now there was more space, but the floor had disappeared beneath a layer of corpses, on which it was hard to avoid standing or sitting. It was also starting to smell...When I left the hold I looked around: the floor had completely disappeared under a thick layer of decomposing dead.”¹³²

The battle of Leningrad continues

106. “ Four thousand suspected Red Army deserters were arrested...up to half the casualties were suspected of self-inflicted wounds...Stalin reacted furiously in his Order 270 on 16 August [1941]. Cowards were not to be tolerated. Those who surrendered should be ‘ destroyed by all means possible, from the air or ground.’ Deserters were to be shot on the spot, and their families arrested. The Order was not published, so naked was the terror it threatened, but it was read out to all units, and to senior Party officials throughout the country.”¹³³
107. By 31 August 1941 the last railway line out of the city was cut off when Mga fell. From Mga the sixteenth (German) Army’s 20th Motorised Division advanced slowly northwards. After being reinforced with tanks from the 12th Panzer Division on 7 September 1941, the 20th Motorised Division took the fortress town of Shlisselburg on 8 September 1941. “With it, Leningrad lost its last land link to the unoccupied Soviet Union. For the next five and a half months, Leningraders would only be able to reach the ‘mainland’ via Lake Ladoga or by air.”¹³⁴

¹³² Anna Reid pp151-2.

¹³³ Moynahan p113.

¹³⁴ Anna Reid p109.

The Siege begins: September to December 1941

108. On 1 September 1941 the sale of unrationed food in Leningrad was banned.¹³⁵
109. On 8 September 1941 Dimitri Pavlov, an expert in food distribution, flew into the city. “He found grain and live cattle and dead meat enough for 33 days, cereals for 30 days, fats for 46, and sugar and confectionary for two months. He set rations in five categories. Best fed were to be troops, and priority workers, then blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, dependents and children.”¹³⁶
110. After Zhadanov, the Leningrad Communist Party boss, and Marshal Voroshilov, the army group commander, informed Stalin that Shlisselburg had fallen, Stalin ordered General Zhukov to fly to Leningrad with a note to Voroshilov, that read: “Hand over command of the Army Group to Zhukov and fly to Moscow immediately.”¹³⁷ Zhukov and three other army generals took off from Moscow’s Central Airport on 13 September 1941.¹³⁸
111. Zhukov is described as:
- “a driving, ruthless young general who had beaten the Japanese at Khalkin Gol on the borders of Mongolia in 1939”,¹³⁹
 - “the outstanding Soviet commander of the Second World War. The three weeks in the autumn of 1941 during which he stopped the Germans in front of Leningrad were to become part of the legend;”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Moynahan p121.

¹³⁶ Moynahan p133.

¹³⁷ Anna Reid p114; Geoffrey Roberts p128-9..

¹³⁸ Moynahan p136.

¹³⁹ Moynahan p136.

¹⁴⁰ Anna Reid p115.

- "...widely regarded as the main architect of the Soviet victory over Adolf Hitler's Germany...[he was] the greatest Soviet general of the Second World War."¹⁴¹

112. According to Zhukov's memoirs, quoted by Anna Reid,¹⁴² he walked in "on a mood drunken defeatism. A meeting of Leningrad's Military Council was in progress, being planned were the demolition of the city's utilities and principal factories, and the scuttling of the [Soviet] Baltic Fleet. [Zhukov's] improvisations included the adaption of anti-aircraft guns for point-blank fire against tanks, the secondment of sailors to the infantry, and the transfer of naval guns from the Fleet's trapped ships to the weakest sectors of the front....He also transferred part of the 23rd Army...south to fight the Germans, and abandoned plans to scuttle the Fleet."¹⁴³

113. The airport north of the Neva remained under Soviet control. "Beginning on September 13 [1941], and ending two and a half months later, a total of 6000 tons of high-priority freight was flown in: 1660 tons of arms and munitions and 4325 tons of food."¹⁴⁴

114. On 17 September 1941 Zhukov this Combat Order:

*"Considering the exceptional importance [of the Pulkovo-Kolpino line], the Military council of the Leningrad Front announces to all commanders and political and line cadres defending the designated line that any commander, politruk or soldier who abandons the line without a written order from the Army Group or army military council will be shot immediately."*¹⁴⁵

115. On the same day, 17 September 1941, Shostakovich spoke on the radio:

¹⁴¹ Geoffrey Roberts p4.

¹⁴² p115.

¹⁴³ Anna Reid p116.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Gilbert pp234-5.

¹⁴⁵ Anna Reid p126; Geoffrey Roberts p130; Moynahan p137.

“I speak to you from Leningrad, at a time when there is heavy fighting with the enemy at the gates. I want you to know, comrades, that the dangers facing Leningrad have not emptied our lifeblood. Only now, we are not just citizens but defenders of our city, and we are all on combat duty.’

He told of his love of the city. *‘this feeling has become more powerful and sharp...Leningrad is my country. It is my native city and my home. Many Leningraders know this same feeling of infinite love for our native town, for its wonderful spacious streets, its incomparably beautiful squares.’ It would always stand, with its grandeur and beauty, on the banks of the Neva, a ‘bastion of my country’, rich with the fruits of culture....”*¹⁴⁶ On 1 October 1941 Shostakoich and his family left Leningrad by air.¹⁴⁷

116. On 20 September 1941 Stalin “...chipped in with orders that the troops around Leningrad should not hesitate, on pain of execution, to fire on Russian civilians approaching them from German lines:

‘It is rumoured that the German scoundrels advancing on Leningrad have sent forward individuals – old men and women, mothers and children – from the occupied regions, with requests to our Bolshevik forces that they surrender Leningrad and restore peace...

My answer is – No sentimentality. Instead smash the enemy and his accomplices, sick or healthy, in the teeth. War is inexorable, and those who show weakness and allow wavering are the first to suffer defeat.

*Beat the Germans and their creatures, whoever they are... it makes no difference whether they are willing or unwilling enemies. No mercy to the German scoundrels or their accomplices.”*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Moynahan p143.

¹⁴⁷ Moynahan p159-160.

¹⁴⁸ Anna Reid pp126-7; Geoffrey Roberts p130-1.

117. The line held. On 24 September 1941 Field Marshall von Leeb "...finally acknowledged that his now exhausted and overextended armies could advance no further, and requested permission to move on to the defensive."¹⁴⁹ The losses on both sides were staggering:

- Army Group North (German) had lost 190 000 men killed or wounded and 500 artillery guns and 700 tanks were lost;
- the [Russian] Baltic Fleet and Northwestern Army Group had lost 214 078 men killed, missing or (mainly) taken prisoner and another 130 848 wounded, 4000 tanks, about 5400 guns and 2700 aircraft were lost.

"Leningrad had been saved from annihilation, partly due to Zukhov's ruthless leadership and the determination of the troops, but mainly because of the German decision to concentrate on Moscow. Army Group North from then on was to be the poor relation on the Eastern Front, hardly ever receiving reinforcements, and constantly afraid of being stripped of units to strengthen formations in the centre and south of the country. This neglect on the German side was exceeded on the Soviet side, with Stalin on several occasions wanting to strip Leningrad of troops, to defend Moscow."¹⁵⁰

118. On 28 September 1941 General Holder issued a memo to Army Group North which reflected the German "...change of strategy from ground assault to starvation and air raids."¹⁵¹

"According to the directive of the High Command it is ordered that:

1. The city of Leningrad is to be sealed off, the ring being drawn as tightly as possible so as to spare our forces unnecessary effort. Surrender terms will not be offered.

¹⁴⁹ Anna Reid p127.

¹⁵⁰ Beevor p240.

¹⁵¹ Anna Reid p130.

2. So as to eliminate the city as a last centre of Red resistance on the Ostsec [the Baltic] as quickly as possible, without major sacrifice of our own blood, it will not be subjected to infantry assault...Destruction of waterworks, warehouses and power stations will strip it of its vital services and defence capability. All military objects and enemy defence forces are to be destroyed by fire-bombing and bombardment. Civilians are to be prevented from bypassing the besieging troops, if necessary by force of arms.”

119. On 29 September 1941 Hitler issued this directive to Army Group North:

“Subject: the future of the City of Petersburg

The Führer is determined to erase the city of Petersburg from the face of the earth. After the defeat of Soviet Russia there can be no interest in the continued existence of this large urban centre. Finland has likewise shown no interest in the maintenance of the city immediately on its border.

It is intended to encircle the city and level it to the ground by means of artillery bombardment using every calibre of shell, and continual bombing from the air.

Following the city’s encirclement, requests for surrender negotiations shall be denied, since the problem of relocating and feeding the population cannot and should not be solved by us. In this war for our very existence, we can have no interest in maintaining even a part of this very large urban population.”¹⁵²

120. “Mass starvation”, stresses Anna Reid, “was not an unforeseen, or regrettable but necessary by-product of this strategy, but its central plank, routinely referred to with approval in planning documents, and followed, once it set in, with eager interest by military intelligence...Ethical considerations do not seem to have prompted a single senior officer [of the Wehrmacht] to

¹⁵² Anna Reid pp134-5; Geoffrey Roberts p126; Moynahan p144.

question a policy that directly led, not only foreseeably but deliberately, to the slow and painful death by starvation of about three-quarters of a million non-combatants, a large proportion of them women and children.”¹⁵³

121. The bombing of Leningrad, by artillery fire during the day, and by bombing by night, took place throughout the siege. According to Soviet sources, about 69 000 incendiary and 4250 high-explosive bombs rained down on the city. The number of civilians killed by enemy fire was 16 747 and more than 33 000 wounded.¹⁵⁴ On one day alone, 19 September 1941, 280 planes dropped 528 high-explosive bombs and about 2000 incendiaries on the city.¹⁵⁵ From 4 September 1941 until the end of the siege the city was pounded by artillery fire on 272 occasions, for up to 18 hours at a time, with a total of 13 000 shells. Worst affected were those districts containing factories. “Fifty-four thousand residents and the whole or part of twenty-eight factories were moved northwards out of immediate firing range, into buildings emptied by evacuation.”¹⁵⁶ On 13 October 1941 12 000 incendiaries were dropped on the city. But, unlike other Russian cities, St Petersburg “...was the showpiece and capital of the Romanov emperors. Its building materials reflected its status, granite or brick in the main, and its roofs were slate or tiles. It did not burn easily.”¹⁵⁷

122. On 6 October 1941 Zhukov left Leningrad to take charge of Moscow’s defence.

123. Between 1 October 1941 and December 1941 Leningrad’s factories produced 452 76mm fieldguns, 29 000 armoured shells and 1854 mortars of different sizes. The whole production

¹⁵³ pp136-7.

¹⁵⁴ Anna Reid p141.

¹⁵⁵ Anna Reid p144.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Reid pp145-6.

¹⁵⁷ Moynahan p174

was sent out of Leningrad to Central Army Group. "...the autumn's massive production effort crippled Leningrad, draining it of the resources either to break the siege or – save at the cost of mass civilian death - to survive it."¹⁵⁸

124. The total population of the city when the last road out of the city was cut on 8 September 1941 was an estimated 2,8 million civilians: 2,46 million in the city and 343 000 in the surrounding towns and villages. Soldiers and sailors came to about another 500 000: in total about 3,3 million. A survey done on 8 September 1941 found that all the available food would not last more than a month at current consumption levels: "Failure to lay in adequate stores of food and fuel before the siege closed was due to the same lethal mixture of denial, disorganization and carelessness of human life as the failure to evacuate the civilian population. The most efficient and concerned administration could not have prevented serious shortage – emergency stocks did not exist, the trains were overloaded, the country's most fertile regions in the process of being overrun – but error, muddle and above all the leadership's refusal to face reality made the situation even worse than it need have been."¹⁵⁹

125. To supplement the inadequate food supplies in the city itself the countryside within the siege ring was scoured for food: this was done "via a mixture of compulsory purchase, requisitioning and 'donations'."¹⁶⁰ This produced 4208 tons of potatoes and other vegetables, 4653 tons of meat, over 2000 tons of hay, 547 tons of flour and grain and 179 000 eggs.

126. Substitutes for flour in the production of bread were found:

- at the mills flour dust was scraped from walls and under floor boards;

¹⁵⁸ Anna Reid p157.

¹⁵⁹ Anna Reid pp160-1.

¹⁶⁰ Anna Reid p164.

- breweries provided 8000 tons of malt;
- the army provided oats which horses would have eaten;
- grain barges which had sunk were salvaged and the grain dried and milled.

These substitutions, and food rationing – the city’s consumption of flour from over 2000 tons of flour a day at the beginning of September 1941 to 880 tons a day by 1 November 1941.¹⁶¹

127. Then there were the substitutes for bread:

- flax-seed cakes used for cattle feed was turned into grey “macaroni”;
- sheep guts from the docks and calf skins from a tannery were converted to “meat jelly”.¹⁶²

128. Rationing was introduced in mid-July 1941: initially it was 800 grams of bread daily for manual workers, 600 grams for office workers, 400 grams for children and the unemployed, plus meat, fats, cereals or macaroni; and sugar. In early September 1941 the rationing was reduced to 500 grams for manual workers, 300 for office workers, 250 for dependants and 300 for children. By 20 November 1941 the ration fell to 250 grams of bread for manual workers and 125 grams (“three thin slices”) for everybody else, plus “derisory quantities of meats and fats”. And the rules forbade a productive worker from taking food home to someone at home who was “unproductive”, such as an elderly relative. “The biggest, inevitable, weakness of the rationing system was its vulnerability to corruption.”¹⁶³ “As the siege progressed, one of the most widespread frauds became concealment of the death of a relative so as to be able to go on using his or her ration card until it expired at the end of the month.” The bodies were hidden in the house in the cold.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Anna Reid p164.

¹⁶² Anna Reid p165.

¹⁶³ Anna Reid pp168-170.

¹⁶⁴ Anna Reid p173.

129. As official sources of food ran out the city's inhabitants created substitute foods –
- The husks of linseed, cotton, hemp or sunflower seeds were pressed into blocks and normally fed to cattle. Grated and fried in oil, they were turned into pancakes, "...the elaborate preparation of which helped give the comforting impression of a real meal."¹⁶⁵
 - Joiner's glue, made from the bones and hooves of slaughtered animals, was soaked in water and boiled with bay leaves "to make a foul-smelling jelly, which they forced down with the help of vinegar and mustard."
 - Semolina, used to clean white sheep skin jackets, was cooked up.
 - Household pets were eaten or swapped so that their owners did not have to eat their own pets.
 - One family found a suitcase full of "fossilised" rusks laid in 20 years before;¹⁶⁶
 - Rye flour used to bake dark brown ration bread "...was cut with 25 per cent cellulose, as well as cottonseed-oil cake, cornflour and chaff."¹⁶⁷
 - "People were mobilized to collect edible pine and fir bark."¹⁶⁸
 - "City districts were each ordered to supply two and a half tons of sawdust a day. That, too, was considered 'edible'. "¹⁶⁹
 - "Rats were caught, skinned and eaten."¹⁷⁰
130. While Leningraders and the Soviet troops defending the city were starving, German combat troops were well fed. "They had a daily intake of 2 236 calories, adequate even in extreme cold. The bread ration was 750 grams a day, and the 250 grams of meat was supplemented by 130 grams of canned meat, each man had 80 grams of sugar, 50 grams of fats, and 10

¹⁶⁵ Anna Reid p182.

¹⁶⁶ Anna Reid pp180-182; Moynahan p211.

¹⁶⁷ Moynahan p214.

¹⁶⁸ Moynahan p214.

¹⁶⁹ Moynahan p214.

¹⁷⁰ Moynahan p214.

grams of coffee and fresh onions. Russians risked their lives crawling into no-man's-land to search dead Germans for the food in the Brotbeutel, the 'bread bags' on their belts where they kept emergency supplies."¹⁷¹

131. According to the NKVD:

- in October 1941 6199 people had died "in connection with food difficulties";
- in November 1941 the number had risen to 9183;
- from 1 to 25 December 1941 to 39 073;
- from 21 to 25 December 1941 between 113 and 147 corpses had been picked up on the streets;
- in the last six days of December 1941 another 13 808 people died, bringing the month's total to almost 53 000.¹⁷² According to Moynahan 11 085 deaths were registered in November 1941, three times the pre-war rate.¹⁷³

132. By 1 November 1941 the Germans had suffered 686 000 casualties. Almost 200 000 were dead, "...seven times as many as had been killed in the whole campaign in France and the Low Countries in 1940."¹⁷⁴

133. On 20 November 1941 the bread ration was cut: for "workers in priority plants and engineers...to 250 grams. Others – white collar workers, dependents, children, the old – had 125 grams. This was two slices of adulterated bread. Life was unsustainable at this level. ... The new ration was a death sentence, and both Zhudanov and Pavlov knew it."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Moynahan p192.

¹⁷² Anna Reid pp189-190; Martin Gilbert pp266-7; Moynahan p257.

¹⁷³ Moynahan p225.

¹⁷⁴ Moynahan p196.

¹⁷⁵ Moynahan p213.

134. On 22 November 1941 the ice on Lake Ladoga was thick enough to allow convoys of trucks to traverse the lake with supplies. Eight trucks made it across with 33 tons of supplies. “This was nothing in itself – the city had been consuming 3000 tons of food a day in normal times – but it showed what could be done.”¹⁷⁶
135. In early December 1941 Stalin decreed that further assaults be launched against the German besiegers. The adjutant of one German infantry division “...noted that the Russians had mounted seventy-eight assaults in the past six weeks. They had broken into German positions seventeen times, and were repulsed each time. They were doomed now as ever. The Germans did not know how many Russians they killed. They could see scores lying dark against the snow, in clumps in no-man’s-land.”¹⁷⁷
136. “Zhadanov needed scapegoats for the failed offensive on the [river] Neva. The blame was shifted to the 80th Division’s ex-commanders, Colonel Frolov and Commissar Ivanov. They were arrested, and brought before a military tribunal the same day. They were found guilty of ‘cowardice and criminal negligence that resulted in the failure of the operation.’ They were shot the next day, with the executions publicized in the press at Stalin’s suggestion.”¹⁷⁸
137. While he was in the Lubyanka prison awaiting execution, General Meretskov was identified by Stalin as the commander Leningrad needed to create a breakthrough. The temperature on the outskirts of Tikhvin was 38° below zero. On 9 December 1941 the Red Army “...broke into Tikhvin in a swirling blizzard...Leningrad was reprieved, the city having enough flour for nine or ten days. “Through this newly operated route 600 to 700 tons of supplies, including “...oil,

¹⁷⁶ Moynahan p221.

¹⁷⁷ Moynahan pp235-6.

¹⁷⁸ Moynahan p237.

petrol, ammunition and other military supplies.” In order to maintain the existing ration level 1000 tons a day were needed. “The emergency food supplies on the ships of the Baltic Fleet had been eaten. So had the army’s reserves of hard tack. People were so badly nourished that the death rate increased daily.”¹⁷⁹

138. The German army was suffering terrible losses. In mid-November 1941 a battalion consisted of 500 men. By 10 December 1941 “...a single officer and NCO and six men were recorded as fully fit in one battalion. “Their comrades were dead, wounded or suffering extreme exhaustion and shock.”¹⁸⁰

139. On 25 December 1941 an increase of 100 grams “...in the daily bread ration of workers and 75 grams for others was announced. The effect on morale was astonishing...At the same time, a secret decision was made to provide privileged Party leaders and others with off-ration rusks, tea, cocoa, sugar and chocolate. The public knew nothing of this.”¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, on that day, 3700 people died of starvation.¹⁸²

140. On 31 January 1942 it was noted that more than 200 000 people had died of starvation and cold in the five months that the siege had lasted.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Moynahan p240.

¹⁸⁰ Moynahan p242.

¹⁸¹ Moynahan p256.

¹⁸² Moynahan p283.

¹⁸³ Martin Gilbert p296.

Mass death: Winter 1941-2

141. In January 1942 the number of civilians who died was 96 751 and in February 1942 96 015:¹⁸⁴
“The greatest number of deaths of the Siege were registered on 6 and 7 February [1942]-4719 and 4720.”¹⁸⁵
“In part thanks to the design of the rationing system, mortality followed a clear demographic. In January [1942] 73 per cent of fatalities were male, and 74 per cent children under five or adults aged forty or over. By May [1942] the majority – 65 per cent – were female, and a slightly smaller majority – 59 per cent – children under five or adults aged forty or over. Children aged ten to nineteen made up only 3 per cent of the total in the first ten days of December [1941], but 11 per cent in May [1942]. Within a single family, therefore, the order in which its members typically died was grandfather and infants first, grandmother and father (if not at the front), second, mother and older children last.”¹⁸⁶
142. The physical symptoms of starvation were emaciation, swelling of the legs and face, skin discolouration, ulcers, loosening or loss of teeth, and weakening of the heart.¹⁸⁷ In starvation’s final stages “...sufferers resembled barely animated skeletons, with hollow stomachs, sunken cheeks, protruding jaws, and blank, frightening stares.”¹⁸⁸
143. The dead were buried in mass graves: 20 000 each in six trenches at Piskarevskoye (a total of 120 000); 60 000 at Bogoslovskoye in a disused sandpit and 10 000 in an anti-tank ditch; 15 000 in 18 anti-tank ditches at Seratimovskoye. Mass graves were also dug. “...the best

¹⁸⁴ Anna Reid p211.

¹⁸⁵ Moynahan p289.

¹⁸⁶ Anna Reid p212.

¹⁸⁷ Anna Reid p212.

¹⁸⁸ Anna Reid p215.

estimate for the number of civilians who died during Leningrad's first siege winter is around half a million."¹⁸⁹

144. "Most obviously, the siege winter meant a narrowing of existence to the iron triangle of home, bread queues and water sources – and to immediate family and neighbours. Sequestered in their dark and freezing flats, reliant on sleds, home-made lamps and scavenged fuel, Leningraders compared themselves to cavemen, to Robinson Crusoe and to polar explorers...With narrowing of the physical world came narrowing of the emotions. Survivors describe themselves as having been 'like wolves' or even more commonly 'like stones'. For almost everyone, it was impossible to think about anything except food: obtaining it, preparing it saving it, calculating how long it could be made to last – all became universal obsessions... At this period, too, Leningraders resorted to their most desperate food substitutes, scraping dried glue from the underside of wallpaper and boiling up shoes and belts..."¹⁹⁰

145. On 9 November 1941 the Radio Symphony Orchestra performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at Leningrad's Philharmonic Hall. The concert was broadcast live to London.¹⁹¹

146. Leningraders relied on the family in the first place for food, and then on "connections": *svyazi*: "...the combinations of string-pulling, exchange of favours and bribery by means of which citizens were able to work their way round the state's monopoly on goods and employment to get themselves everything from jobs, telephones and university places to a bucket of potatoes or a new pair of shoes."¹⁹² After the family, Leningraders relied on friends and work colleagues. But above all, if they had employment, they received a worker's ration card and

¹⁸⁹ Anna Reid pp230-1.

¹⁹⁰ Anna Reid pp234-6.

¹⁹¹ Martin Gilbert p255.

¹⁹² Anna Reid p252.

possibly access to off-ration meals.”¹⁹³ Some jobs were more equal than others: “Among factories the best supplied were the large prestigious defence plants, though their staff’s chances of survival were pulled down to the civilian average by the physical demands of their work, by targeted bombardment and by the fact that even after call-up most defence workers were quicker-to-starve men.”¹⁹⁴ Another sought after job was in food processing or food distribution. Those who got those jobs did not generally starve to death: at one sweet factory all 713 employees survived the siege; at a bakery only 27 out of 334 workers died, and the victims were all men. “Canteen waitresses and bread-shop salesgirls were notoriously ‘fat’, as were orphanage staff...”¹⁹⁵ And, not surprisingly, those who worked at the Communist Party headquarters, were the best fed of all. “Visitors [to Party headquarters] came away with tantalising hints of abundant food...and a Red Army supply officer remembered delivering smoked ham, sturgeon and caviar, left over from a shipment *out* of the city to officials’ evacuated families.”¹⁹⁶ If Party officials at headquarters were at the top of the food chain, peasants, refugees from the countryside, were at the bottom. According to a contemporaneous account “...by the end of 1941 all these groups of peasants had frozen to death, as had the refugee women who had been packed into schools and other public buildings.”¹⁹⁷ Anna Reid comments that that account is “...exaggerated, but not by much. According to an NKVD report ‘...refugees were dying in large numbers. In Vsevolozhsk...130 corpses had been collected from homes and hostels. Another 170 had been found in the hospital, about a hundred lying unburied in the cemetery, and six on the streets’.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Anna Reid p254.

¹⁹⁴ Anna Reid p254.

¹⁹⁵ Anna Reid p261.

¹⁹⁶ Anna Reid p263.

¹⁹⁷ Anna Reid p265.

¹⁹⁸ Anna Reid p266.

147. An airlift began on 16 November 1941. Aircraft carried "...the most concentrated food possible: pressed meats, smoked fish, canned food, powdered egg, condensed milk, lard and butter." But the transport aircraft, even though accompanied by fighters, were liable to be shown down by German fighters.¹⁹⁹
148. In January 1942 food was getting to Tikhvin and then to Lake Ladoga, across the frozen lake on the Ice Road, conveyed by truck. "But the bulk of the food was not getting through to the city. It was piling up at the railhead on the western shore of the lake. "In the lakeside warehouses, for example, were: 2202 tons of meat, but only 243 tons in the city; 8479 tons of flour whereas in Leningrad there were 2106 tons."²⁰⁰
149. On 22 January 1942 Moscow's State Defence Committee ordered the mass evacuation of Leningrad. "The Ice Road having frozen to the requisite thickness several weeks earlier, it was to take place by lorry, across Lake Ladoga...the programme...was to cover 500 000 civilians prioritizing women, children and elderly."²⁰¹ According to official figures "...11296 evacuees made it across in January 1942, 117 434 in February, 221 947 in March and 163 392 in April, making an impressive, plan-beating total of 514 069 in less than four months. This takes no account, however, of those who died on the way, either during the crossing itself or in the trains that took evacuees onwards into unoccupied Russia...A wartime grave at Vologda, filled mostly with fleeing Leningraders, is estimated to contain 20 000 dead."²⁰² "The departures reduced Leningrad's civilian population to that of a small provincial city. Three and

¹⁹⁹ Moynahan pp211-2.

²⁰⁰ Moynahan p279.

²⁰¹ Anna Reid p268; Moynahan p284.

²⁰² Anna Reid p278.

a half million before the war, it had fallen to around a million by April 1942, to 776 000 by the end of August and 637 000 by the end of the year.”²⁰³

150. There was no anarchy during the siege, “...but the city did suffer a crime wave, especially of theft and murder for food and food cards, and, most notoriously, of cannibalism.”²⁰⁴ The thieves were often abandoned children, especially those too old – older than 14 years – to be placed in orphanages.²⁰⁵ There were 1216 arrests in the first six months of 1942 for murder for food or ration cards. “Food thieves thrived. Every factory, enterprise and institution had its canteen. The first wartime arrest for stealing canteen supplies had come on the third day of the war...The pre-war penalty for food theft by officials was two to three years in prison, increased to eight years at the start of the siege. It now became death.”²⁰⁶ But: “more crime must have gone unrecorded, since in the depths of the winter the police themselves partially ceased to function. By 10 February 1942 of the 2800 members of the NKVD, 152 had died of “exhaustion”, 1080 were in hospital and “at least a hundred reported in sick each day.”²⁰⁷

151. In December 1942 police arrested 26 people for cannibalism; 356 in January 1942; 612 in February 1942; “...300 in March and April, then rose again slightly in May [1942] before falling off steeply through June and July. By December 1942, when the phenomenon finally tailed off, 2015 ‘cannibals’ had been arrested in total.”²⁰⁸ In their situation reports of December 1941 the NKVD referred to the following cases:

- a mother had smothered her 18-month daughter in order to feed herself and three older children;

²⁰³ Anna Reid p350; Moynahan p482.

²⁰⁴ Anna Reid p280.

²⁰⁵ Anna Reid p282.

²⁰⁶ Moynahan p212.

²⁰⁷ Anna Reid p284-5.

²⁰⁸ Anna Reid p288.

- a 26-year old man, laid off work; had murdered and then eaten his 18-year old roommate;
- a metalworker and Party member and his son had killed two woman refugees and hidden their body parts in a shed;
- an unemployed plumber had killed his wife in order to feed their teenage son and nieces;
- an unemployed 18-year old had murdered his grandmother, boiling and eating her liver and lungs;
- a 17-year old had stolen an unburied corpse and put the flesh through a table top mincer;
- a cleaner had killed her one-year old daughter, and fed her to her two-year old.²⁰⁹

152. Those arrested for cannibalism in December 1941 were 26, 366 in January 1942 and in the first two weeks of February 1942 494. “Most were women in the last stages of emaciation...Olga Trapitsina-Matreenko helped to carry the body of her grandmother downstairs to the courtyard on the night that she died. When she went back at first light to take it for burial, the cadaver had already been cannibalized.

The cuts were sold as meat pies in the alleys round the Haymarket...They were sold as horse meat, or dog, or cat.”²¹⁰

Waiting for liberation: January 1942-January 1944

153. A phenomen which has not been emphasized before is the extreme cold of the winter of 1941/1942: “...even by Russian standards, the winter of 1941-2 was punishingly cold, and hit the German armies hard, most of all those of Army Group North. The sudden plunge in temperature, Hitler stormed over dinner at the ‘Wolf’s Lair’ on 12 January [1942], was ‘an unforeseen catastrophe, paralyzing everything. On the Leningrad front, with a temperature of

²⁰⁹ Anna Reid p287.

²¹⁰ Moynahan pp338-340.

42 degrees below zero, not a rifle, not a machine gun nor a field gun, has been working on our side.’ Aircraft were grounded, tank and truck engines refused to start and horses waded in snow up to their bellies, so that to move from place to place troops had to shovel a path by day along the route their transports were to take at night.”²¹¹ On 24 and 25 January 1942 the temperature in Leningrad dropped to 35 degrees Celsius. On those two days 5369 death certificates were issued.²¹²

154. German soldiers stole clothes from Russian peasants and the corpses of Russian soldiers. As one German soldier wrote: “Their felt boots, unfortunately, we have to cut from their feet, but they can be sewn back together again. We’re not as bad as the 2nd Battalion, who chop dead Russians’ legs off and throw them out on top of the stove in the bunker.”²¹³
155. If the lot of the besieging German soldier was bad, it was nothing compared to that of his besieged Russian counterpart. The rations were poor, the soldiers deserted, shot themselves in the hands or feet or “...committed suicide in substantial numbers, but actually died of hunger.”²¹⁴ Some of the Russian soldiers resorted to cannibalism. This is the account of Yershov, senior supply officer to the 56th Rifle Division of the 55th Army: “One day Sergeant Lagun noticed that an army doctor, Captain Chepurniy, was digging in the snow in the yard. Covertly watching, the Sergeant saw him cut a piece of flesh from an amputated leg, put it in his pocket, re-bury the leg in the snow and walk away. Half an hour later Lagun walked into Chepurniy’s room as if he had something to ask him, and saw that he was eating meat out of a frying pan. The sergeant was convinced that it was human flesh...so he raised the alarm and in the course of the ensuing investigation it became clear that not only were the hospital’s sick

²¹¹ Anna Reid p314.

²¹² Moynahan p308.

²¹³ Anna Reid p315-6.

²¹⁴ Anna Reid p316.

and wounded eating human flesh, but so too were about twenty medical personnel, from doctors and nurses to outdoor workers – systematically feeding on dead bodies and amputated legs. They were all shot on a special order of the Military Council.”²¹⁵ Yershov recounted another appalling story: that of Russian soldiers murdering food carriers, eating the food they were carrying, and then eating their bodies: “In early January 1942 the divisional commander started getting urgent calls from regimental and battalion commanders, saying that this or that group of soldiers hadn’t been fed, that the carrier hadn’t appeared with his canteen, having apparently been killed by German snipers. Thorough checks revealed that something unbelievable was happening: soldiers were leaving their trenches early in the morning to meet the carriers, stabbing them to death, and taking the food. They would eat as much as they could, then bury the murdered carrier in the snow and hide the canteen before returning to their trenches. The murdered would go back to the place twice a day, first finishing off the contents of the canteen and then cutting off pieces of human flesh and eating those too.”²¹⁶

156. Despite the poor condition of the Soviet armies defending Leningrad, Stalin ordered an offensive to be launched against the besieging German armies: “Overall, the winter offensive of January to April 1942 lost the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts 308 000 out of a total 326 000 troops committed to combat. Of these 213 303 were ‘medical losses’ – ie the wounded and those who died in hospital – and 95 000 ‘irrevocable losses’- ie the dead in battle, captured and missing. The operations of May and June [1942] lost the Northern fronts another 94 000 men, of whom at least 48 000, according to German records, were taken prisoner...”²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Anna Reid pp318-9.

²¹⁶ Anna Reid pp319-320.

²¹⁷ Anna Reid p329.

157. The world premier of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony took place in Knibyshev on 5 March 1942. "It was a triumph, the applause cascading on and on through the packed hall. The audience cheered and clamoured for the composer...From this moment, the symphony lodged itself in the emotional landscape of the war. It was sound of Leningrad, the defiance and courage of the besieged city set to music...The premiere was broadcast on radio stations across Russia."²¹⁸
158. When spring came to Leningrad in 1942 the "... ice rotted and broke on the canals, snow slid in water-heavy avalanches off roofs and balconies, and the straight-sided piles of fire-fighting sand, their retaining planks long gone for firewood, thawed and crumbled...As the hours of daylight lengthened and ration levels increased, Leningraders began to emerge from their 'small radii', reacquainting themselves with the outside world and with ordinary human feeling."²¹⁹ The postal service started to work again after March 1942.²²⁰
159. "With spring, the snow began to melt. It revealed the corpses of those who remained in the streets. Some were cannibalised. "Severed legs with meat chopped off them", said the clarinettist Victor Kozlov. "Bits of body with breasts cut off. They had been buried all winter, but now they were there for all the city to see how it had stayed alive."²²¹
160. There was a clean-up campaign conducted in March-April 1942, which has been credited with "...miraculously preventing epidemics of the three classic famine diseases – dysentery, typhoid fever and typhus." In reality, this was not quite true. Though the overall death rate fell from March onwards, in April [1942] numbers of dysentery and typhoid cases per thousand

²¹⁸ Moynahan pp380-381.

²¹⁹ Anna Reid p332-3.

²²⁰ Anna Reid p338.

²²¹ Moynahan p2.

head of population were five to six times higher than a year earlier; and typhus twenty-five times higher.”²²² The head of the Leningrad garrison reported in May 1942 that:

- only 7% of flats had running water;
- 9% had sewerage;
- up to a third of householders suffered serious lice infection;
- many courtyards were still covered in human waste;
- typhus ‘hotspots’ included recuperation clinics, children’s homes, railway stations, and evacuation points.²²³

161. There was a “gardening drive”. Sleds and equipment were distributed. The “garden drive” created thousands of vegetable patches in parks, squares and on waste ground.²²⁴ “Major efforts were made to clean up the city and remove the accumulated filth which threatened an epidemic. The population was put to work planting cabbages on every square plot of ground...The Leningrad Soviet claimed that 12 500 hectares of vegetables had been planted in and around the city in the spring of 1942’.”²²⁵

162. Food was requisitioned in large quantities from collective farms within the siege ring: “As well as making their usual deliveries, via their collectives, to the state, peasants, were obliged to provide animals and seed corn to refugees in their areas, to subscribe funds to a tank column...and to ‘donate’ grain from their personal stores to the Red Army.”²²⁶

²²² Anna Reid p344.

²²³ Anna Reid pp344-5.

²²⁴ Anna Reid p345.

²²⁵ Beevor p340.

²²⁶ Anna Reid p346.

163. Another drive which was launched was one against food theft and black-market trading. “But although hundreds of food shop and food distribution agency staff were arrested (500 in July, 494 in August [1942], and substantially amounts of ill-gotten property confiscated...both continued to flourish.”²²⁷
164. “The score [of the Seventh Symphony] had been copied on microfilm and flown out of Russia to Teheran. From there, it travelled by staff car to Cairo, then on to London, across Africa and round Spain and far out over the Bay of Biscay, beyond the range of German fighters based in France.”²²⁸
165. The Seventh Symphony was performed on 29 June 1942 by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood. “The Albert Hall was sold out. The audience, both in the hall and on BBC Radio was enthralled.”²²⁹ On 19 July 1942 Toscanini conducted the NBC Orchestra. “From its first note, American audiences received the Seventh with rapture. Millions listened to the broadcast from Radio City between 4:15 and 6pm EST...It was a triumph. Audiences and radio listeners thrilled to the music. There was a ten-minute standing ovation at the first concert performance on 14 August.”²³⁰ In its first season in the United States “...the symphony was broadcast by 1934 American radio stations, with 62 live performances.”²³¹
166. At the beginning of July 1942 the score of the Seventh Symphony was flown into Leningrad

²²⁷ Anna Reid p347.

²²⁸ Moynahan pp7-8.

²²⁹ Moynahan p459.

²³⁰ Moynahan p465.

²³¹ Moynahan p8.

167. Hitler lost patience with the siege: “He wanted the city stormed in an operation code-named Nordlicht, Northern Light. He was confident. Leningrad, he declared, over his vegetarian lunch on 6 August [1942], “must disappear utterly from the face of the earth. Moscow, too. Then the Russians will retire into Siberia.”²³²
168. The city had also “...turned into a city of women, who now made up three-quarters of the population and the majority of workers in every manufacturing sector except weapons production and ship building...The Hermitage’s head of security complained that whereas before the war he had 650 guards, he now had 64 ‘a mighty troop composed mostly of elderly ladies of fifty-five or more plus some in their seventies.’”²³³
169. As the food improved and the numbers of people to feed dropped, “...Leningraders now ate, by Soviet standards, almost normally...In addition to bread, meat, fats and sugar, coupons became exchangeable for tiny amounts of salt, wine, dried onion, dried mushrooms, cranberries, salted fish, coffee and matches.”²³⁴

The performance of the Seventh (Leningrad) Symphony in Leningrad on 9 August 1942

170. The symphony was to be played by the Radio Orchestra, the Leningrad Philharmonia, the city’s leading orchestra, having been evacuated before the siege began. The Radiokom Orchestra had lost more than half of its members during the winter of 1941/1942. The survivors were “weak and traumatized.”²³⁵ At the first rehearsal in the Radiokom studio, an oboist, Ksenia Matus, got a shock: “of an orchestra of a hundred people there were only the

²³² Moynahan p5.

²³³ Anna Reid p351.

²³⁴ Anna Reid p352.

²³⁵ Moynahan p2.

fifteen of us left. I didn't recognize them. They were like skeletons."²³⁶ The conductor, Karl Ilyich Eliasberg, had to make up the numbers. "He found them in the remnants of the regimental bands. Nikolai Nosov, a former trumpet player in a jazz band with no experience of classical music, was horrified to find himself playing the symphony's difficult trumpet solo."²³⁷ The orchestra rehearsed every day, except Sunday. The rehearsals were short. One clarinet player described what happened during rehearsals: "We would start rehearsing and get dizzy with our heads spinning when we blew. The symphony was too big. People were falling over at rehearsals. We might talk to the person sitting next to us, but the only subjects were hunger and food. Not music."²³⁸

171. On 9 August 1942 the symphony was due to be played commencing at 6pm. At 5.30 pm the Russian artillery was due to commence firing. "Crowds began flooding towards Art Square in the early afternoon. Soldiers came on foot from the front at Polkovo. A group of women from the Sverdlovsky plant walked to the hall straight after work...with a half an hour to go the Russian guns opened up...Artillery from a Guards regiment revealed their own position by using tracer shells to tempt the German unit into an artillery duel. Art Square and the rest of the city were spared...It was as well because the Square was overflowing."²³⁹ Within the Philharmonia Hall, the "audience stood packed together" on the upper floor.
172. "Karl Eliasberg mounted the rostrum, wearing a tailcoat that hung from his emaciated frame...At 6pm [he] introduced the work in a speech that went out over the radio: 'Comrades, this is a great event in the cultural life of our city. it is the first time you will hear, in a few moments, the Seventh Symphony of our compatriot Dimitri Shostakovich. His symphony calls

²³⁶ Moynahan p3.

²³⁷ Moynahan p3.

²³⁸ Moynahan p246.

²³⁹ Moynahan pp494-5.

for strength in combat and belief in victory. The performance of the Seventh in the besieged city itself is the result of the unconquerable patriotic spirit of Leningraders. Their strength, their belief in victory, their willingness to fight to the last drop of blood and to achieve victory, over their enemies. Listen, Comrades.'

He made no mention of Stalin, nor the party."²⁴⁰

173. "After a few moments of silence, the Symphony began...

From the very first bars, Berggotts found 'we recognised ourselves and the path we had trodden, the epic of Leningrad which had already become legendary: the ruthless enemy bearing down on us, our defiant resistance, our grief, our dream of a bright world...The orchestra was worthy to play this music, and the music was worthy of them, because it expressed all they have overcome'."²⁴¹

174. Eliasberg said: "People just stood and cried and cried. They knew that this was not a passing episode but the beginning of something. We heard it in the music. The concert hall, the people in their apartments, the soldiers at the front – the whole city had found its humanity. And in that moment we triumphed over the soulless Nazi war machine."²⁴²

175. Moynahan ends the opening chapter, "Overture", of his book, as follows:²⁴³

"At heart of the Seventh was a howl of the evil washing over it. For the moment, that evil was taken to be exclusively Nazi. But Red Terror had preceded it and would outlast it. Shostakovich knew this as intimately as any. It had carried off close friends, and family, the tortured body of one dumped in a Moscow landfill, others broken in the Gulag Camps...

²⁴⁰ Moynahan pp497-8.

²⁴¹ Moynahan p498.

²⁴² Moynahan p502.

²⁴³ p10.

The difficult, complex and magnificent symphony, and the musicians who endured such horrors to play it, resisted and defied the inhumanity within Leningrad as well as without. It was Shostakovich's Requiem for a noble city beset by the twin monsters of the century."

1943/1944

176. In January and February 1943 two offensives were launched on the orders of Stalin. Both succeeded to the extent that a corridor was opened which allowed the construction of a new 34 kilometre temporary railway line into Leningrad. "It was the beginning of the end. But only that...The Red Army had broken the German hold on Lake Ladoga, but had cleared only a fragile corridor to the 'mainland, just five miles wide at its narrowest point."²⁴⁴ "In the same week two fresh Russian offensives had been launched. One was far away in the Leningrad sector. This broke the 17 months' encirclement of that great city, lifting the pressure of the siege. Although it did not go far enough to wipe out the German salient that had projected to Lake Ladoga, across the rear of the city, it cut a hole through to Schlüsselburg along the lake shore – and that strategic tracheotomy created a windpipe through which the garrison and population could breath more freely."²⁴⁵

177. But the city remained besieged: "Shades of the mass death were everywhere, most of all in the wrecked and filthy 'dead' flats from which it was Mashkova's²⁴⁶ job to rescue books from the Public Library. Each had its tale of death, looting, suicide: of children arrested, gone to orphanages or simply missing. On 7 April 1943 she visited three such, one in particular 'typical for Leningrad':

²⁴⁴ Anna Reid p374-5.

²⁴⁵ Liddell Hart p612; Gordon Corrigan, p356.

²⁴⁶ She was the head of acquisitions at the Public Library: Anna Reid p232.

‘Once there was a family of six. The father and eldest daughter leave for the Red Army. Nobody knows if they are alive or dead. The mother stays on in Leningrad with three children – mentally handicapped Boris aged eight, Lida, aged thirteen, and Lyusya, fifteen. Bravely she tries to save them from death’s clutches, but can’t do it. In December Boris dies, in January Lida, and then, of hunger diarrhea, the mother herself. The only one left is Lyusya – on a dependant’s card in a dark, cold, wrecked flat, covered in muck and soot. She drags herself to the market, sells things, then as a last resort, starts stealing from the neighbours. She was caught with stolen food cards and arrested: there’s been no news of her since March last year. Perhaps she’s dead too. And what remains is a frightening, dystrophic room, full of filth and rubbish. No family, just two empty beds amid the chaos – all that’s left of a once-cosy home. Oh how familiar this is!²⁴⁷

178. The air raids and shelling of the city continued in 1943: “...alerts [of air raids] averaging slightly over one per night from January through to May. Shelling – worse in the first half of the year – became so accurate that tram-stops had to be moved. ...Barrages now fell into an established pattern, coinciding with morning and evening journeys to work.”²⁴⁸
179. After the January 1943 breakthrough there was little serious fighting on the Leningrad front: “an early spring thaw hindered troop movements, and save for another unsuccessful attempt to widen the land corridor to the “mainland” in July [1943], attention turned to the centre and south.....”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Anna Reid p376.

²⁴⁸ Anna Reid p377.

²⁴⁹ Anna Reid p381.

180. In September 1943 "...by which time the Wehrmacht was in general retreat along its whole central and southern front, Hitler's generals began to argue for withdrawal from Leningrad...Hitler allowed himself to be partially persuaded, giving von Kuchler permission to build a new defensive 'Panther Line'...Fifty thousand labourers, mostly drafted from the local population, constructed 6 000 bunkers, laid 125 miles of barbed wire and dug 25 miles of trenches and tank traps...The ring around Leningrad, however, remained as tight as ever."²⁵⁰

181. By the time the Soviet counter-attack on the German position began on 14 January 1944 the Soviet army had "...nearly twice as many men as Army Group North (1,24 million compared to von Kuchler's 741 000), more than twice as many guns and more than four times as many tanks and planes. Gozorov²⁵¹ now had overwhelming superiority of numbers, and controlled the air so thoroughly that Red Army lorries no longer bothered to shade their head lights at night."²⁵² "At the start of the year [1944] the Germans had still closely enveloped Leningrad. ...In mid-January the Russians launched their long expected offensive to break the enemy's grip of Leningrad. Striking from the coast just west of the city, Gozorov's forces drove a wedge into the left flank of the German salient while Meretskov's²⁵³ drove a deeper one into its right flank near Novgorod. The initial penetrations produced the familiar illusion that the German forces were "trapped", but they achieved an orderly withdrawal, by stages to the baseline of the salient."²⁵⁴

182. It is appropriate to end this paper by quoting Anna Reid:

²⁵⁰ Anna Reid p383.

²⁵¹ General Luonid Gozorov

²⁵² Anna Reid pp383-4.

²⁵³ General Kirill Meretskov, the former Chief of the General Staff, until he was sacked by Stalin and replaced by Zukhov. He served on the Leningrad front, after his dismissal. In January 1941 he "...had been arrested, imprisoned and tortured by the NKVD...and then as no-one could remember what he had been arrested for...[he was] released and restored to his former rank in September [1941]"; Gordon Corrigan, p227.

²⁵⁴ Liddell Hart p735-6.

“The end, like the end of all great conflicts, left a vast silence – the silence of hushed sirens and guns, of the never-to-return missing and dead, and in Leningrad’s case, of grief and horror unexpressed, of facts falsified or left unsaid. It also meant new beginnings – militarily, of the great Soviet push to Berlin; privately, of facing up to loss and rebuilding lives; publicly, of repopulating and repairing an emptied and damaged city; politically, of new rounds of repression.”²⁵⁵

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