



Siege of Leningrad

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Dates

World War II's most infamous siege began a little over two months after the launch of "Operation Barbarossa," Adolf Hitler's surprise invasion of the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, in defiance of a nonaggression pact signed two years earlier, some 3 million German soldiers streamed across the Soviet frontier and commenced a three-pronged attack.

Up to 2 million lives were lost, including about 800,000 civilians or 40% of the population of the city now called St Petersburg.



Reasons

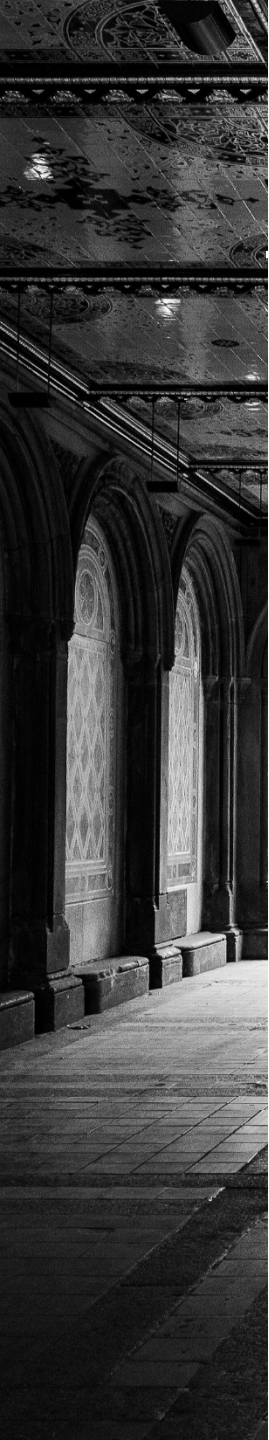
1. The leaders of fascist Germany thought that the seizure of Leningrad, Kronstadt and the Murmansk railway would entail the loss of the Baltic and the Far North by the Soviet Union and lead to the death of the Baltic Fleet.
2. The Nazis expected to use the most convenient sea and land communications for supplying Army Groups North and Center.
3. Hitler's command hoped to seize an advantageous starting area for a strike in the rear of the Red Army troops who were covering Moscow.



Hunger

During the bitterly cold winter of 1941-1942, Leningrad was rocked by a starvation epidemic that claimed as many as 100,000 lives per month. In their desperation, people ate everything from petroleum jelly and wallpaper glue to rats, pigeons and household pets. For warmth, they burned furniture, wardrobes and even the books from their personal libraries. Theft and murder for ration cards became a constant threat, and the authorities eventually arrested over 2,000 people for cannibalism.

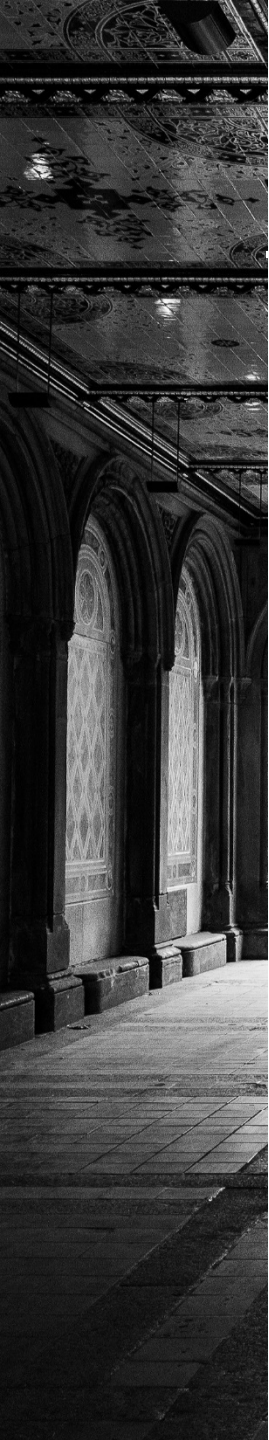




Thousands of similar tragedies played out in Leningrad during what became known as the “Hungry Winter,” and yet the city still held out against the Nazi siege. In early 1942, the Soviets evacuated some 500,000 civilians across the “Road of Life” on Lake Ladoga, reducing the starvation-ravaged population to a more manageable 1,000,000. Following the springtime thaw, meanwhile, Leningrad’s survivors conducted a thorough cleanup campaign to remove bombed-out rubble and bury the dead lining their streets.

Gardens were also planted across the city in courtyards and parks. Food remained in short supply, but the city had pulled itself back from the brink of collapse.

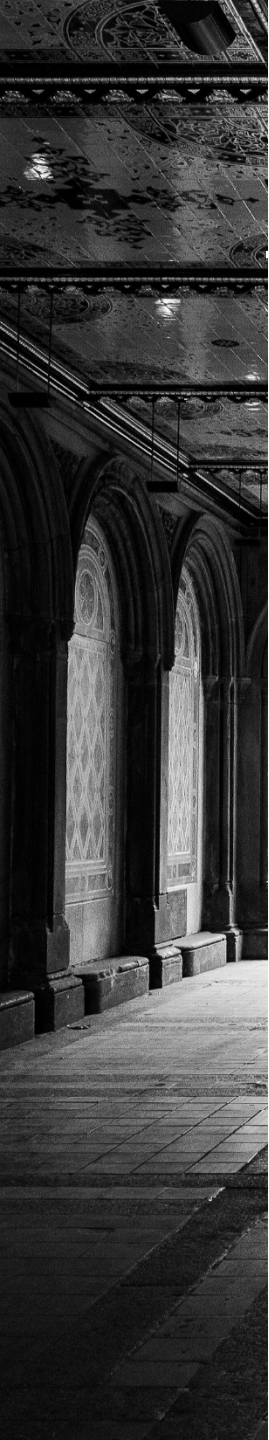




During the winter of 1941, the daily bread ration in Leningrad was only 125 grams per person. Contemporary witnesses claim that the piece of bread displayed in St. Petersburg's Road of Life museum is significantly larger than the bread ration at the time.

The bread was made of a mixture unthinkable today and contained bark, bran, pomace, pine needles and a bit of flour.





When the last stocks of flour ran out, bakers tried to make bread substitutes with dust. Eventually, trucks with food also began to drive across the ice road. The first ones to return loaded with goods were welcomed with cheers as well as tears. But, in the first two weeks alone, 157 trucks broke through the ice and sank.

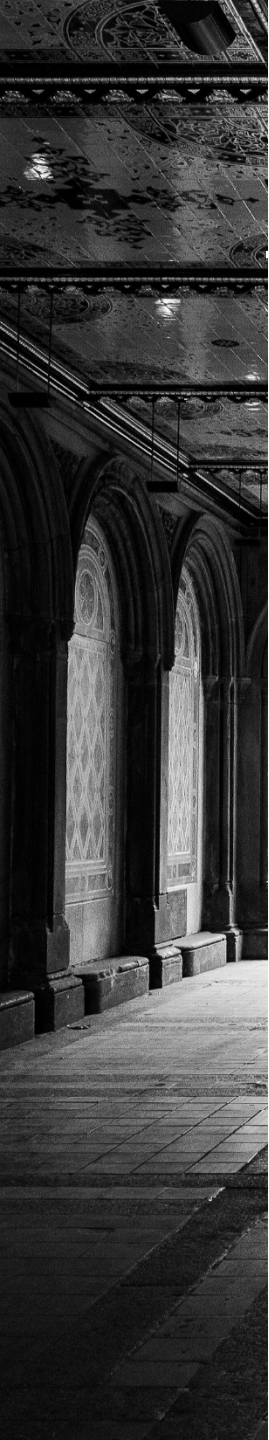


Tanya Savicheva

Tatyana Nikolaevna Savicheva is a schoolgirl who, from the beginning of the siege of Leningrad, began to keep a diary in a notebook. Almost the entire family of Tanya Savicheva died in the period from December 1941 to May 1942. Her diary has nine pages, six of which are dates of death of loved ones - mother, grandmother, sister, brother and two uncles.

Tanya herself died already in evacuation on July 1, 1944 at the age of 14. Only her older sister Nina and brother Mikhail survived the blockade, thanks to which Tanya's diary survived and became one of the mournful symbols of the Great Patriotic War.





Tanya Savicheva's diary is on display at the Museum of the History of Leningrad, a copy of it is in the showcase of the Piskarevsky cemetery memorial, where 570,000 residents of the city who died during the 900-day Nazi blockade are buried, and on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow.

A child's hand, losing strength from hunger, wrote unevenly, sparingly. A fragile soul, struck by unbearable suffering, was no longer capable of living emotions. Tanya simply recorded the real facts of her life - the tragic "visits of death" to her home.

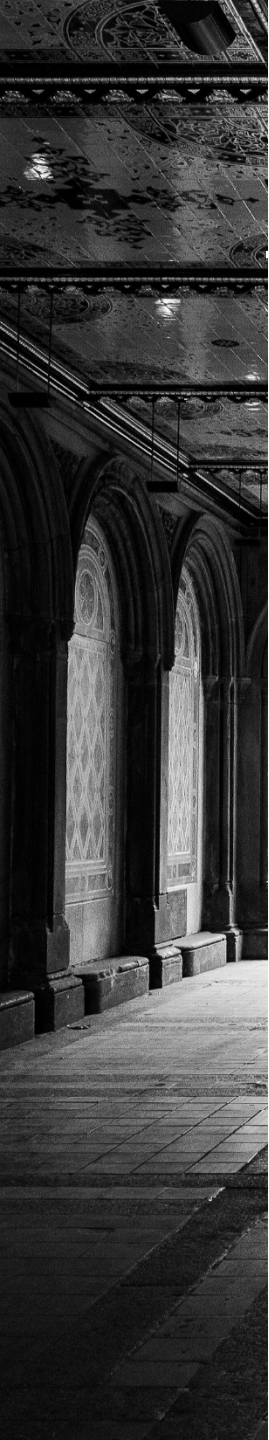


Leningrad's Road of Life

Passage across the ice

Leningrad was under siege for nearly two and a half years by the Wehrmacht: from September 1941 until January 1944. Only during the two extremely cold winters was there a way in and out: across frozen Lake Ladoga. Food was brought into the city across the ice and more than one million people were able to escape. Lake Ladoga was the "Road of Life" and at the same time a dangerous journey.





A life-saving load

Horse-drawn sleighs were the first vehicles on the ice road. Starving horses had to pull goods and people along the treacherous snow-covered path. Not all managed to finish the distance. But, many horses with urgently needed food returned to the city.



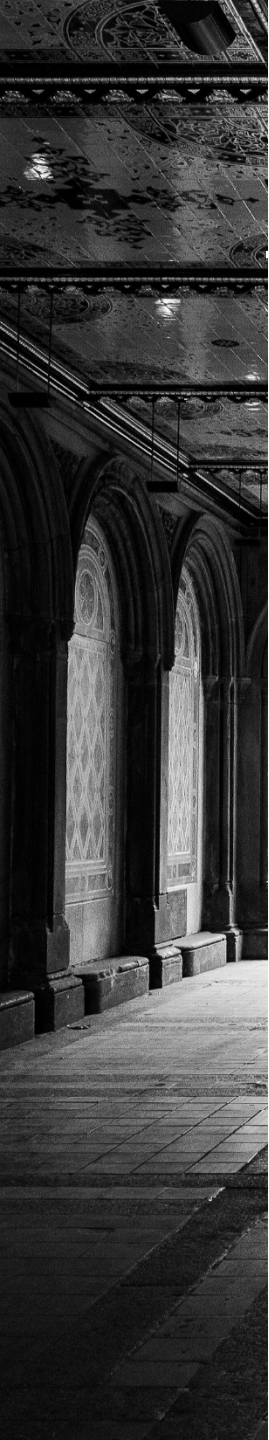
Events

1942 year. Intensification of shelling. Counter-battery fight

In April, the German command, during Operation Eisstoss, unsuccessfully tried to destroy the ships of the Baltic Fleet on the Neva.

New artillery batteries were deployed around Leningrad. The Germans drew up a map of the city and outlined several thousand of the most important targets, which were fired upon daily.





At this time, Leningrad was turning into a powerful fortified area. Large defense centers were created, many thousands of kilometers of trenches were equipped. Special spotter aircraft and observation balloons were allocated. Thanks to these measures, in 1943, the number of artillery shells that fell on the city decreased by about 7 times.



The long-awaited breakthrough followed in early 1944, when the Red Army mobilized some 1.25 million men and 1,600 tanks in an offensive that overran the German lines. Like the rest of Hitler's forces in Russia, Army Group North was soon pushed into a general retreat.

On January 27, 1944, after nearly 900 days under blockade, Leningrad was freed.



The victory was heralded with a 24-salvo salute from the city's guns, and civilians broke into spontaneous celebrations in the streets.



Every year on May 9, Russia celebrates the victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany. The other Allied forces, such as France and the UK, celebrate Victory Day one day earlier on May 8. Russian Minister of Defense, Sergei Shoigu, presided over the parade as it rolled through Moscow's Red Square.





Source of information:

- <https://www.dw.com/en/st-petersburg-marks-75-years-since-nazi-siege-of-leningrad/a-47254112>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Siege-of-Leningrad>
- <https://www.history.com/news/the-siege-of-leningrad>

A black and white photograph of a war-torn city street. The scene is filled with rubble and debris, with smoke rising from the background. A large group of people, including men, women, and children, are walking along the street. The buildings on either side are heavily damaged, with some showing signs of fire and structural collapse. The overall atmosphere is one of devastation and hardship.

***Thank you for your
attention!***