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War and Terror in Leningrad: The Museum of the Defense of Leningrad and War Commemoration under Stalin



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War and Terror in Leningrad: The Museum of the Defense of Leningrad and War Commemoration under Stalin

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the history of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" (1943-45) and its successor Museum of the Defense of Leningrad (1946-1953) in the context of the development of the war museum culture in the Soviet Union during the Second World War and the politics of war commemoration after its end. The museums constituted an important part of the war propaganda machine and were employed by the Soviet state to mobilize its population and to create an historical narrative of the war. In addition to the role of the central ideology, regional factors were as important in the creation of the war-themed displays, which I demonstrate by examining the war-themed exhibitions and museums in Kyiv, Minsk, and Moscow.

The Museum of the Defense of Leningrad represented distinctly local narratives of the siege, including starvation in the besieged city. The attack and closure of the museum represented yet another step in the unification of the central narratives of the war during Late Stalinism. The ideological tendency of late Stalinism was to downplay the official commemorations of the war, which resulted in the closure of the vast majority of war exhibitions and museums. Yet, the fate of each individual institution also depended on the local factors, including the client-patron relationships between Stalin and the regional leaders, and between the regional leaders and the museums. The Museum in Leningrad was purged along with its former patrons during the course of the Leningrad Affair. The closure of the museum and other attacks on the memory and commemoration of the siege traumatized its survivors, hindered historical scholarship, and contributed to the discourse of the city's victimhood. In addition to the history of the institutions, this dissertation examines the biographical case studies of the museum's organizers, who survived the siege, worked to commemorate it, and then faced the political terror of late Stalinism.

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This project has a personal dimension for me not only due to all the ties that connect me to the city of Saint Petersburg and its history, but also because the idea for this dissertation was given to me by my dad. Although he warned me to not become a historian, as he understood the toll that our profession takes on one's life, he taught me about scholarly integrity and professionalism, which he always demonstrated by his own example. This dissertation is dedicated to his memory.

SERGEI F. REMIRI TOKHTASEV MEMORIAE SACRUM

## Contents

## Terminology, Acronyms, and Abbreviations

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| ChGK | Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR |
| *GKO* | State Defense Committee |
| *Gorkom* | City Committee of the VKP(b) |
| *ispolkom* | executive committee |
| *Lengorispolkom* | Executive Committee of the Leningrad City Soviet |
| *Lenoblispolkom* | Executive Committee of the Leningrad Regional Soviet |
| *Lensovet* | Leningrad Soviet |
| LF | Leningrad Front |
| LGU | Leningrad State University |
| LPO | Leningrad Party Organization |
| MGB | Ministry of State Security |
| MPVO | Local Antiaircraft Defense |
| *narkom* | People's Commissariat, Commissar |
| *Narkompros* | People's Commissariat of Enlightenment |
| *narodnoe opolchenie* | People's Militia |
| NKVD | People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs |
| Istpart | Leningrad Institute of History of the All-Union Communist Party |
| *obkom* | Regional Committee of the VKP(b) |
| *oblast'* | region |
| TsK | Central Committee |
| VKP(b) | All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) |

## Introduction

Clementine Churchill, the wife of the British Prime Minister and a chair of the British Red Cross "Aid to Russia" Fund, visited Leningrad in April, 1945 as a part of her extended trip to the Soviet Union.[1] After visiting a children's trauma hospital, she headed to the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," which was a must-see destination for foreign visitors whose trips were organized and controlled by a multitude of security and ideology officials. Mrs. Churchill was impressed by the exhibition and wrote about it in her travel account, published as a fundraising booklet, detailing the presented statistics and emphasizing the heroism of the Leningraders.[2] The philanthropist also enjoyed the company of the handsome and elegant director of the exhibition, Lev Rakov; when saying goodbyes she even complimented his winter officer's hat. Later that day, Rakov was dining at home with his friend Mikhail Rabinovich and their respective wives, when their supper was interrupted by a call for Rakov to come, wearing the hat, to Bolshoy Dom, Leningrad's secret police headquarters. An exact copy of his hat was then made to be gifted to Clementine Churchill.[3] Five years later, in 1950, Rakov was expelled from the Communist Party, arrested, and sentenced to 25 years in prison. He was charged with various crimes related to the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad; the Party Collegium that examined his case and stripped him of his party membership prior to his arrest, accused him inter alia of "foreignness," because Mrs. Churchill cared to like his hat. Once praised in the local and central press alike, the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad was closed in August 1949; the government that had successfully

[1] About the trip see Clementine Churchill's own account: *My Visit to Russia* (London: Hutchinson, 1945); also Knight, Claire. "Mrs Churchill Goes to Russia: The Wartime Gift Exchange between Britain and the Soviet Union," in *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. Anthony Cross (Open Book Publishers, 2012): 253–68.
[2] Churchill, *My Visit to Russia*, 18-19.
[3] Mikhail Rabinovich, *Vospominanija dolgoj zhizni* (Saint-Petersburg, 1996), 235.

used it for the purposes of both domestic and international propaganda had disposed of it and its staff members deeming its exposition harmful and criminal.

***Objectives***

This dissertation will discuss the emergence of war-themed exhibitions and museums within the paradigm of war ideology and propaganda and the power relationships in conjunction with the locally specific narratives of war in the Soviet cities of Moscow, Kyiv, Minsk, and Leningrad. The second objective is to analyze the effects of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad and its closure on the commemoration and scholarship of the siege in the context of the Soviet regime's war commemoration policies. The third objective is to examine the impact of the terror campaigns during late Stalinism on the people who were involved in the commemoration and recording of the siege by investigating the biographical case studies of some organizers of the Museum of Defense, and a few of their associates.

***Museums and Power; Emergence of the Local War Narratives***

When analyzing the emergence of war-time museums and exhibitions and the public historical narratives that they conveyed, I engage with museum theory. Public museums, argues sociologist Tony Bennett, "acquired their modern form during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries," and their formation should be "viewed in the light of a more general set of developments through which culture, in coming to be thought of as useful for governing, was fashioned as a vehicle for the exercise of new forms of power" directed at "civilizing the population."[4] Modern museums became crucial institutions in the formation of nation-states and

[4] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 19-21. Bennett contextualizes the formation of a public museum using Michel Foucault's concepts of disciplinary or governmental power and the cultural "instruments of power." Ibid., 22-23; Also see C. Duncan and A. Wallach who investigate the ideological function of a museum and its connection to the power structures in "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History*, 3(1980): 448-469.

national identities.[5] If the Second World War was the focal point of the Bolshevik project that finished the process of the formation of the Soviet nation,[6] then the history of wartime museums should be investigated in order to understand the shaping of memory, construction of the war narratives, and the ways in which the central government and local actors participated in both. A museum, argues cultural historian Evgeny Dobrenko, "is an ideal milieu for producing a "useful past,"[7] yet literature about the Soviet war museums is scant;[8] the Anglophone historiography had almost exclusively focused on the case of Leningrad exhibition/museum devoted to the siege and its tragic fate in connection with the Leningrad Affair. The studies that are devoted to the modern post-Soviet states' World War II museums do not or barely engage in historical comparisons with the wartime museums of the past, despite the potential of such comparisons to provide a greater insight on the continuity of certain narratives.[9]

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[5] Ibid., 76; Also see Brenda Trofanenko, "Chapter 7: The Public Museum and Identity: Or, the Question of Belonging." *Counterpoints* 272 (2006), 96; Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," *Oxford Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (1988): 57–68; Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); D. Fleming, "Making City Histories," in *Making Histories in Museums*, ed. G. Kavanagh, (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999): 131–42; F.E.S. Kaplan, ed. *Museums and the Making of 'Ourselves': The Role of Objects in National Identity* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994); F. McLean "Museums and the Construction of National Identity: A Review," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 3(4) (1998): 244–52.

[6] Evgeny Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism: The Aesthetic of Politics* (Yale University Press, 2020), 4; Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik* Revolution (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7-8; "Introduction: The Culture of Late Stalinism, 1941–1953," in *Soviet culture and power: a history in documents, 1917-1953*, ed. Katerina Clark et.al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 348-349.

[7] Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, 70.

[8] About the Jewish Museum in Vilnius (1944-49) see E. David Fishman, *The Book Smugglers. Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis* (University Press of New England: ForeEdge, 2017); Among the Russian language studies that include the analysis of the Soviet war-themed museums are N.V. Fatigarova, "Muzeĭnoe Delo v RSFSR v Gody Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny (Aspekty Gosudarstvennoĭ Politiki)," in *Muzeĭ i Vlast'. Gosudarstvennai͡a Politika v Oblasti Muzeĭnogo Dela (XVIII—XX Vv.),* ed. Kasparinskai͡a, S. A (Moscow, 1991): 173–226; M.P. Simkin, "Sovetskie Muzei v Period Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny," in *Trudy Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta Muzeevedenii͡a*, II (Mosco͡w, 1961): 176–326; Yu. Z. Kantor, "'Prostranstvo pami͡ati' o Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭne: goszakaz i muzeĭnai͡a intelligentsii͡a v 1941–1945-e gody," in *Kul'tura i vlast' v SSSR. 1920–1950-e gody: Materialy IX mezhdunarodnoĭ nauchnoĭ konferent͡sii. Sankt-Peterburg, 24–26 okti͡abri͡a 2016 g.* (Moscow, 2016), 81-90.

[9] E.g. Karen Petron's recent article does not mention other Russian war-themed exhibitions in "WWII in the "Russia – My History" Museum," in *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia,* Ed. by David

The scarcity of scholarship devoted to the Soviet wartime exhibitions and museums could potentially be explained by their generally short lifespans: the vast majority of them opened between 1944-46 and were closed by 1950-51, and unlike the Museum of Defense of Leningrad, the other museums were closed quietly and did not cause dramatic terror campaigns. However, if we view museums as tools that governments employ to construct useful narratives and a way in which cultural institutions serve for the benefits of the state's power, then we have to consider the closures of the museums to be as important as their beginnings; their stories demonstrate how the government produced the "useful past" and when and why the government stopped considering their narratives to be useful. "Forgetting," argues sociologist John Urry, "is as socially structured as is the process of remembering."[10]

The role of the museums and exhibitions in the Soviet "propaganda state," using Peter Kenez's term, is underexplored in general, e.g. Kenez's monograph (1985) which is dedicated to the multitude of the mediums of ideological mobilization in the USSR in 1917-1929, does not cover the museums. Karel Berkhoff's detailed study of wartime Soviet propaganda *Motherland in Danger* (2012) also features nothing on museums or exhibitions. A section of Evgeny Dobrenko's monograph *Late Stalinism: The Aesthetics of Politics* (2020) called "The War Museum" somehow focuses on the films, rather than the museums. In a rare exception, David Brandenberger, in his monograph *National Bolshevism* (2002), devoted to the rise of Russian nationalism under Stalin,

L. Hoffmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 340-360; The wartime museum in Leningrad is mentioned only in passing in the chapter devoted to the contemporary exhibition 'Leningrad during the Great Patriotic War' at the State Museum of the History of St Petersburg in Zuzanna Bogumił et al., *The Enemy on Display: The Second World War in Eastern European Museums.* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), ch.1, 27-62; the article of the Polish scholars Rafał Wnuk and Piotr M. Majewski that features analysis on the contemporary museums of the Second World War in Moscow, Minsk, and Kyiv mentions the historical continuity of the museum in Minsk; in regards to Kyiv historians mistakenly claim that even though the decision to establish the war-themed museum "in Kiev was made as early as during the war, it was opened to the public on May 9, 1981." "Between Heroization and Martyrology: The Second World War in Selected Museums in Central and Eastern Europe." *The Polish Review* 60, no. 4 (2015), 10.

[10] John Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past." *The Sociological Review* 43, no. 1_suppl (May 1995), 50.

briefly highlights the role of exhibitions and museums in 1938-39 "in the celebration of the usable past as film and the belles lettres," and argues that they reinforced "elements of the official line."[11] Brandenberger again mentions the historical exhibitions discussing the Russocentrism of wartime propaganda that used the military heroes of the Russian pre-revolutionary past and argues that "museums complemented propaganda efforts with exhibitions devoted to similar themes."[12] Brandenberger's analysis, therefore, does not expand on the other topics represented in the wartime exhibitions and museums and does not explore the regional differences. These and other works of secondary literature have enriched my analysis of the Soviet ideology. My dissertation seeks to add value to the scholarship on wartime propaganda by providing a comparative analysis of the wartime exhibitions/museums in the Soviet cities; and to contribute to the critical investigation of role of Soviet exhibitions and public museums in construction with the "useful past" in general. I argue that the museums constituted an important part of the war propaganda machine and were employed by the Soviet state actors to mobilize its population as well as to create a public historical narrative of the war according to the current political and ideological goals of the state and, when applicable, regional differences in the narratives of the war.

The analysis of the narratives presented in and by the exhibitions that are told through their content and collections, is crucial for understanding both remembrance and forgetting in Soviet society. Following the concepts of museum theorist Susan M. Pearce, I view the collected objects, art, and documents in semiotic terms as a kind of material language, while the collections are narratives of experiences. [13] When creating a collection, its curators construct the meaning of the

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[11] About the influence of this Stalin's speech see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 89, 105.

[12] Ibid., 152.

[13] Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition.* (London: Routledge, 1995), 22, 142.

objects they collect and display. The exhibitions, therefore, are analyzed "as narratives told in particular historical time and space."[14]

While the creators of the war museums adhered to the ideological framework and museum content plans developed by Moscow's professional ideologists, I demonstrate that the local museum workers were able to express a certain level of diverse thought, agency, and creativity, the degree of which was largely defined by the regional specifics and by individual efforts and circumstances on the local level. The emergence of local war narratives and the extent of their differences from the narratives developed by Moscow's ideologists largely depended on the powers and initiatives of the regional party leaders, who in many cases served as patrons for the museums in their respective locales and defined the limits of what was possible. The effect of regional differences in narration of the war is especially evident in the comparison of the representation of the Holocaust in the museums of Kyiv and Minsk in the first chapter of this dissertation;[15] and in the analysis of the locally specific discourse of war in the Leningrad Museum of Defense in the second and third chapters.[16]

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[14] Zuzanna Bogumił et al., *The Enemy on Display*, 1.

[15] When discussing Soviet memorialization of the Holocaust I consult with the vast historiography on the subject, which includes Kirill Feferman, *Soviet Jewish Stepchild: The Holocaust in the Soviet Mindset, 1941-1964*, (VDM Publishing, 2009); Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018); Zvi Gitelman, "Politics and Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union", *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 14-42; Lukasz Hirszowicz, "The Holocaust in the Soviet mirror," in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 29-61; Karel C. Berkhoff, "'Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population': The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941-45," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, 1 (2009), 61-105; P.A. Rudling, "The Invisible Genocide: The Holocaust in Belarus," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, ed. J.-P. Himka, and J.B. Michlic, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 59–82.

[16] Here I engage with David Brandenberger, "Repressed Memory: The Campaign Against the Leningrad Interpretation of the Blockade in the Stalinist USSR, 1949-1952 (A Case Study of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad)", *Modern history of Russia*, no 3, (2016): 175-186; Catriona Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair.' Remembering the 'Communist Alternative' in the Second Capital," *Slavonica*, no. 17:2 (2011): 103-122; Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (New York, 2006); Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City: Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930-1950*

Conceptually, I propose expanding the framework of client-patron relationships to include institutions, in this case museums, that served as the "clients" of their "patrons."[17] The client-patron relationships between Stalin and the regional leaders, and between the regional leaders and the museums largely defined the fates of many wartime museums. To put it simply, if Stalin's regional protégé was in a strong position of power and was personally vested in a museum (i.e. Belarusian Panteleymon Ponomarenko), it stayed open. And on the contrary, the Leningrad Museum of the Defense fell because it was in the patronage network of the local leaders who were purged in the Leningrad Affair.

***Memory and Commemoration of the War: Local Narratives within the Central Framework***

The developments surrounding the establishment of the war exhibitions and museums in the Soviet Union and the subsequent closure of the majority of them during the last years of Stalin's rule directly correlated with shifting regime policies vis-à-vis wartime propaganda and the commemoration of the war after it ended.[18] The content of the museums, therefore, should be critically evaluated in the context of larger cultural and social trends, and in comparison with other ideological and propagandistic institutions, including press. The ideological tendency of late Stalinism was to downplay the official commemorations of the war and avoid spending state funds

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 153-163; M. V. Loskutova, ed. *Pamiat' o Blokade: Svidetel'stva Ochevidtsev i Istoricheskoe Soznanie Obshchestva*. (Moscow, 2006).

[17] About personalistic networks of power and client-patron relationships in the Soviet Union under Stalin see John P. Willerton, *Patronage and politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27-33; Benjamin Tromly. "The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics, 1949-1950," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 5 (2004): 707–29; T. H. Rigby, "Was Stalin a Disloyal Patron?," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 3 (1986): 311–24; about the relationship between local and central authorities in post war Ukraine, also see Filip Slaveski, *Remaking Ukraine after World War II: The Clash of Local and Central Soviet Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[18] About the memory and commemoration of the war in the Soviet state see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: the Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, 1994); David R. Marples, "Introduction: Historical Memory and the Great Patriotic War," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 54, no. 3/4 (2012): 285–94; Polly Jones *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (2013); David L. Hoffmann, ed., *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2022).

on large memorialization projects. The attack at the Leningrad Museum of the Defense, however, was peculiar, because it occurred against the backdrop of the wide-spread ideological campaigns of terror that directly affected people involved in the efforts of scholarship and commemoration of the siege; unlike the case of the museum in Leningrad, I was unable to find any evidence that the people who worked in other closed museums around the Union were criminally prosecuted after "their" museums' closures.

The staff at the Soviet museums began organizing the war-related patriotic exhibitions from the very first days of the invasion; their content was directly connected with the ideological framework of the Great Russian nationalism or National Bolshevism, which developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.[19] The development of the large exhibitions of trophy weapons, however, was connected with the specialized system of collection of trophies, established after the offensive campaign of the Red Army in 1942. Exhibitions of the trophy weapons subsequently opened in many cities of the Soviet Union, with the largest one being in Moscow's Gorky Park. At the same time, state ideologists and local leaders alike ordered the creation of various commissions devoted to the collection of war-related materials, and the organization of war-themed exhibitions and military museums across the Union. Unlike the exhibitions of trophy weapons, these museums (that also included weapons) exhibited a large amount of art, historical artifacts and documents, dioramas, murals, and everyday objects.

Since the beginning of the German occupation of many regions and republics of the Union, including Ukraine and Belarus, and the rise of the partisan resistance in these regions, the Soviet

[19] About the 1930s emergence of the Great Russian nationalism that replaced the previously prevailing internationalism see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); David Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky, "'The People Need a Tsar': The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): 873–92; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2018), 394–431.

ideologists have praised the partisans as folk heroes and people's avengers. The partisans were presented as a mass nation-wide movement universally supported by the civilian population of their respective locales. The propagandistic emphasis on the universal support of the partisan movement was especially crucial in Ukraine, due to a presence of the large anti-Soviet resistance in the republic. This partisan myth became a prominent feature of the Soviet ideology, which reflected in the creation of the Kyivan exhibition "Ukrainian Partisans in the Fight against the German-Fascist Invaders," and the Minsk Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the narrative of which was rooted in the representation of Belarus as the "Partisan Republic." The Exhibition/Museum of the Defense of Leningrad also had a large section devoted to the partisan movement in the region.

The central role of the Communist Party and personally Stalin was a universal feature of the war-themed exhibitions and museums. Stalin's portraits, statues, and other imagery were prominently used in the exposition spaces, his quotes captioned the displays. His military genius and fatherly care of the Soviet people was emphasized in the museum materials and guidebooks. After the end of the war, Stalin quickly lost interest in its commemoration or celebration of its heroes, apart from himself, wanting "his country to curtail talk about the war, to move past the ordeal and on to the tasks of economic reconstruction and the waging of the Cold War against the capitalist nations."[20] Stalin, assisted by his ideologists, unleashed various political and ideological campaigns against everything vaguely Western and "un-patriotic" on the domestic front. The commemoration politics of late Stalinism that limited the official efforts to memorialize the war and celebrate its heroes applied to the war-themed exhibitions and museums. By the end of Stalin's

[20] Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 103. Steven Maddox also argues that Cold War "had a tremendous impact on internal Soviet politics and everyday life," including Moscow's effort to impose ideological conformity. *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 170.

rule, the majority of the museums were closed, which causes some historians to downplay the case of Leningrad. For example, Catriona Kelly argues against the peculiarity of Leningrad's case due to the similar processes of re-orchestration of the local history "in the key of Soviet triumphalism" and "airbrushing of war memory" that occurred elsewhere in the Union.[21] However, the comparison of the fates and popular memory of the wartime museums in various Soviet cities with the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad demonstrates the unique nature of its destruction.

One of the central objectives of this project is investigation of the impact of the Leningrad Museum of Defense and its destruction, which became a focus of historiographical debate in recent literature.[22] What are the factors behind the long-lasting memory of the Museum of Defense? For instance, the existence of the war exhibitions in Moscow and Kyiv is practically forgotten – the scholarship on the subject is scarce and the popular memory of them exists only in specialized web forums of military history buffs. On the other hand, the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad is a subject commonly explored in professional scholarship and the mass media. The Siege of Leningrad, the subject of the museum, was not only "the greatest demographic catastrophe ever experienced by one city in the history of mankind,"[23] but, as Alexis Peri observed, "an internal crisis of profound questioning and intellectual tumult."[24] I believe that the *blokadniki* - survivors of the Siege - themselves clearly understood and perceived their experiences as absolutely unique

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[21] Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair'," 109-110.

[22] Some scholars suggest that the post war purges aimed at the destruction of the local memory of the siege, e.g. Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy*, 146; Alexis Peri, *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 251; Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City: Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 188-191. The others downplay the impact of the Stalinist terror on the memory and scholarship of the siege and the significance of the destruction of the museum and its consequences, David Brandenberger, "Repressed Memory," 182; Catriona Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair'," 109-110.

[23] John Barber, "Introduction: Leningrad's Place in the History of Famine," in *Life and death in besieged Leningrad, 1941-44*, ed. Barber, John, and A. R. Dzeniskevich (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.

[24] Alexis Peri, *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 7.

and something which was necessary to be remembered and talked about.[25] In fact, despite official politics of memory that, for a time, focused on the efforts to erase the evidence of the uniqueness of the most severe siege in history, the blockade became a foundation of the Leningrader's identity and a testament to the uniqueness of the city itself. Additionally, as demonstrated in the third chapter of this dissertation, while many other war museums were closed around the same time as Leningrad's museum, the circumstances surrounding the closure of the latter were, indeed, peculiar which warranted a long lasting traumatic reaction in the community. Despite the harshness of Kelly's claim that "Leningrad/St Petersburg […] has a victim complex the size of an entire city,"[26] I believe that this perceived notion of collective victimhood on behalf of the city's inhabitants is exactly what makes the case of Leningrad peculiar and unique.

This dissertation draws on the concept of the myth of Heroic Leningrad, which was insightfully developed in Lisa Kirschenbaum's monograph *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995*, in which she demonstrates how the state's initiative and individuals' efforts to remember and commemorate intertwined in the most complex ways, eventually creating the myth of the Heroic Leningrad. Kirschenbaum emphasizes the unique nature of Leningrad's war experience, which caused Stalin's state to attempt "not merely to manage memory but to obliterate it," since "projects like the popular Museum of the Heroic Defense of Leningrad emphasized the local dimensions of the Leningrad epic and stoked local pride in the city's unique fate at the

[25] As I investigate the siege narratives presented in the museum, I consult a rich body of literature on the subject of the siege and Leningrad's defense. Among these works are Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Nikita Lomagin, *Neĭzvestnai͡a blokad*a (Saint-Petersburg, 2004); David M. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad 1941-1944*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Sergey Iarov, *Leningrad 1941–42: Morality in a City under Siege* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA, USA: Polity Press, 2017); Jörg Ganzenmüller, *Osaždennyj Leningrad:1941-1944; gorod v strategičeskich rasčetach agressorov i zaščitnikov* (Moscow, 2019); Nikita Lomagin, *V tiskakh goloda: blokada Leningrada v dokumentakh germanskikh spetssluzhb, NKVD i pis'makh leningradtsev*, (Moscow, 2019); John Barber and A. R. Dzeniskevich, eds. *Life and death in besieged Leningrad, 1941-44* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[26] Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair'," 104.

expense of the cult of Stalin's wisdom and talent."[27] I also draw on the concept of myth developed by Roland Barthes, who argues in *Mythologies*, that "Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact."[28] In regards to a museum, the myth is presented there in a narrative form via the collection of displayed items, their annotations, the guided tours led by the museum docents, and the published guidebooks.

Speaking about commemoration of the war, historian David L. Hoffman argues that people who survived the war "needed to make sense of the horrific carnage and loss they had experienced. Most of all they had a psychological need to remember and mourn loved ones who had perished, and war memorialization served that need."[29] I argue that the museum, which perpetuated the myth of Heroic Leningrad, had a productive impact on its visitors from its onset, serving as a therapeutical space for the survivors of the Siege to process the horrors of their everyday life and to provide justification for their sacrifices. The analysis of the museum's content also does not confirm a perspective that "the suffering of non-combatants during the War played only a minor role in the display."[30] I demonstrate that, despite the prevalence of the discourse of heroism in the Museum of the Defense, its organizers managed to create a unique space that presented a significant amount of materials that demonstrated human experiences and suffering. The closure of the museum and the other attacks on the memory and commemoration of the siege further

[27] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy*, 116; Stephen Maddox argues that "the party apparatus sought to shape the public's understanding of Leningrad's wartime experience by stressing the heroic and feeding into the growing myth of the Great Patriotic War." Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 153.
[28] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York, 1972), 143.
[29] David L.Hoffman, "Introduction: the politics of commemoration in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia," in *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. David L. Hoffmann (Routledge, 2022), 5.
[30] Kelly, "'The Leningrad Affair'," 108.

traumatized its survivors and contributed to the discourse of the city's victimhood. Additionally, these developments of late Stalinism had a tremendous impact on the historical scholarship of the blockade, leading to the interruption of the siege studies and the loss of many materials, documents, and artifacts.

***Intelligentsia in the Service of the Soviet State: Strategies for Adaptation, Survival, and Success***

Throughout this dissertation, I am more concerned with the experiences of the people who lived through the war and terror than with high-level politics. The role of the museum's organizers is one of the central topics of this dissertation as I explore how the individuals participated in the creation of the museum narratives within the larger framework set by the central government's ideologists on both central and local levels. On the other hand, I examine how Stalinism affected these people and what strategies they employed to survive and, at times, succeed in Stalinist society. In particular, I examine the themes in the biographical case studies devoted to the lives of several individuals, who created the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad"/the Museum of Defense, including the exhibition and museum's director Lev Rakov, and artists Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya, who worked on the exhibition's design. These people are, using Sheila Fitzpatrick's term, my point of observation on Stalinism.[31]

What was the role of the individuals in creating the narrative of the siege? The memories are not isolated, rather they exist in social context and are influenced by the memories of other individuals, public discourse, and the media. On the other hand, the collective, or historical, memory is largely constructed by members of the cultural and creative intelligentsia, who express their thoughts, ideas, and findings through various forms of public scholarship and art. In the Stalinist state, freedom of speech was limited and the works of public intellectuals were heavily

[31] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's team: the Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2017), 10.

influenced, controlled, and censored by the propaganda apparatus of the Communist Party. However, as Sheila Fitzpatrick argued, "if final authority [for the Stalinist cultural policy] was vested in the party, the party nevertheless delegated, bestowed, or countenanced other types of cultural authority that resided in individuals or cultural institutions."[32] Despite the ideological limitations, and thanks to the fluidity and fluctuations of the "party line" as well as the regional differences and protection of the established cultural authorities, Soviet intellectuals and artists were able to express a certain level of diverse thought and creativity.[33] In Leningrad, in particular, local "party leaders and prominent intellectuals acquired a measure of autonomy from Moscow" during the siege.[34] One should also not underestimate the genuine patriotism of the large masses of the Soviet citizens during the war and the degree to which the goals of propaganda could coincide with individual convictions of the talented people who were called to the ideological warfront. In other words, I argue that the personal goals, beliefs, experiences, and initiatives of the people who created each individual exhibition or museum mattered and should be investigated.

The study of the people who actively fashioned themselves as members of the Soviet creative intelligentsia necessarily engages with the concepts developed by the scholars of Soviet subjectivity and identity.[35] In their efforts to achieve success in Stalinist society, my characters

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[32] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 239. Fitzpatrick argues that it was the cultural values of old nonproletarian intelligentsia that ultimately prevailed over the political power of the party in terms of cultural authority. Ibid, 256.

[33] David Brandenberger argues that "the war eased some of the pressures of state supervision" which was reflected in the works of the Soviet cultural intelligentsia as an "explosion of cultural self-expression." *National Bolshevism*, 144. About the privileged position of cultural intelligentsia despite the constant "harassment of censorship" in Stalinist Soviet Union and the role of the cultural authorities see Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 245-256. In an example specific to Leningrad, Alexis Peri argues that the isolation of Leningrad from the mainland "afforded the diarists a certain independence of thought as well as a unique vantage point to reflect on Soviet society." *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 10.

[34] Bidlack and Lomagin, 67.

[35] See Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, 1999); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's 'Magnetic Mountain' and the State of Soviet Historical Studies," *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neue Folge, Bd.44, H.3 (1996): 456-463; Igal

learned to "speak Bolshevik," using Stephen Kotkin's term,[36] and worked on self-transformation in order to be aligned with a historical epoch and current ideology.[37] However, unlike Hellbeck's or Halfin's protagonists, who aimed to merge with the Communist collective, my "main characters" longed for the opportunity to pursue work that was suitable to their personal, rather than collective, interests, or, in other cases, adapted their skills and abilities to the needs of the state in order to improve their lives and reach professional success. Even though their personal agency in the work they performed was "not autonomous in nature but [was] produced by, and dynamically interact[ed] with, ideology,"[38] throughout the life calamities they faced they privately remained loyal to people and ideas that became contrarian to the Soviet ideology of socialism and social realism. Additionally, the successful fitting in the ranks of the Soviet cultural elites did not bring lasting satisfaction or prosperity to my characters as they lived through Stalinism. Nikolai Suetin struggled with the lack of creative freedom and with the persistent threat of terror that consumed many of his friends and colleagues; Lev Rakov was tortured by the NKVD and imprisoned twice, many of his associate-historians faced the same, or worse experiences.

The impact of terror on my "characters" is another crucial topic of this dissertation. The infamous Leningrad Affair (1949-1953) was a large scale political purge which caused the destruction of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad and imprisonment of Lev Rakov. The purge has been a focus of historiographical attention and debates on the reasons behind it, which

Halfin, *Terror in My Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Alexis Peri, *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth- Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[36] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

[37] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 54-55, 67-73.

[38] Ibid, 12.

stemmed from the lack of available documentation.[39] Whatever was the main motive, or a multitude thereof behind the purge, the Museum of Defense was named in the indictment, as its patrons, former Leningrad party bosses, were accused of using the museum for criminal purposes of self-promotion. The museum was subsequently destroyed, becoming a victim of the Leningrad Affair. The purge was seemingly "connected to concealing the city's wartime fate,"[40] as it led to deliberate efforts on behalf of the central government and new city leaders to erase the memory of Leningrad's wartime experiences and caused an immense measure of suffering and violence against the individuals who were involved in the recording of the siege's history and its commemoration.

Despite the magnitude of the Leningrad Affair, I argue that its effects on the city's intelligentsia should be examined in the broader context of the ideological and political terror campaigns of late Stalinism, which began in 1946 with the so-called Zhdanovshchina against everything "foreign and anti-patriotic," the anti-Semitic campaigns against "cosmopolitanism" and the "Doctor's plot," and culminated with the Leningrad Affair and its aftermath.[41] The impact of this terror was even more significant in Leningrad, because it intensified the trauma of the deadly

[39] On the Leningrad Affair see Viktor I. Demidov, and Kutuzov, Vladislav A., *Leningradskoe delo* (Leningrad, 1990); A. Z. Vakser, *"Leningradskoe delo." Itogi izuchenija i novye aspekty.* Saint-Petersburg, 2012, See Blair A. Ruble "The Leningrad Affair and the Provincialization of Leningrad," *The Russian Review* 42, no 3. (July 1983): 301–320; Benjamin Tromly. "The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics, 1949-1950." Europe-Asia Studies 56, no. 5 (2004): 707–29; K. A. Boldovskiĭ, *Padenie "blokadnykh sekretareĭ": Partapparat Leningrada do i posle "Leningradskogo dela"* (St.-Petersburg, 2018); Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 67-77; Catriona Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair.' Remembering the 'Communist Alternative' in the Second Capital," *Slavonica*, no. 17:2 (2011): 103-122; See also the polemic on the reasons of the affair between David Brandenberger who argues for the ideological reasons of the Leningrad Affair in "Stalin, the Leningrad Affair, and the Limits of Postwar Russocentrism," *The Russian Review* 63, no. 2 (2004): 241-55; and Richard Bidlack, "Ideological or Political Origins of the Leningrad Affair? A Response to David Brandenberger." The Russian Review 64, no. 1 (2005): 90-95.

[40] Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 76.

[41] On late Stalinism I consult with Evgeny Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism: The Aesthetic of Politics* (Yale University Press, 2020), 4; A. Pyzhikov and A. Danilov, *Rozhdenie sverkhderzhavy, 1945–1953 gody* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002); Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Julian Furst, *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London: Routledge, 2006); Katerina Clark et.al., *Soviet Culture and Power: a History in Documents, 1917-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

siege itself, destroyed the efforts of many people who worked on its remembrance, and resulted in the eventual provincialization of the city. "To some extent," argue Bidlack and Lomagin,"the Kremlin succeeded in silencing what the cold, hunger, and enemy bombardment of the blockade had not been able to suppress."[42]

***Structure of the Dissertation***

Chapter I examines the development of war museum culture in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and its subsequent decline using the case studies of three Soviet capitals: Moscow, Kyiv, and Minsk. I investigate how the Soviet war exhibitions created and conveyed the public historical narrative during the war and in the immediate post-war years. Despite the increasingly centralized ideology in the post war years, this chapter demonstrates the significance of the local and regional variations in the narratives of the war, including the representation of the Holocaust. While war exhibitions and museums played an important role in the war-time propaganda machine, with the beginning of the Cold War and due to the need to reconstruct the country, Stalin and his ideologists lost interest in large war memorialization projects which led to the closures of the majority of war museums. However, the fate of each particular museum depended on the local politics and regional developments, which were significantly tied to the patronage networks of Soviet power structures.

Chapter II turns to Leningrad, telling the story of the Exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" that existed in 1944-1945 and was reorganized into the permanent Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. This chapter investigates the reciprocal and complex relationship between the-then emerging myth of the Heroic Leningrad and the memory of the survivors of the siege reflected in the exhibition. The exhibition, which narrated the siege from the side of Leningrad's

[42] Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 76.

leadership and Stalinist ideology, focused more on the city's military defense rather than the experiences of the people inside the ring. It presented the genocidal hunger and bombardments in a limited yet impressive manner using everyday objects, art, photographs, and dioramas. The chapter also demonstrates that from its beginnings, the exhibition was intended to be a permanent center of the study of the blockade and defense of Leningrad, and was valued and supported by local party officials, who actively participated in its creation.

Chapter III investigates the expansion and reorganization of the exhibition into a large museum and the museum's history until its formal dissolution in 1953, investigating the impact of these tragic events on scholarship and the remembrance of the siege. Despite the efforts of the central government to regain ideological control and centralize the war narratives, the museum continued to celebrate local patriotism, the actions of Leningrad's party organization, and commemorate local experiences, including civilian suffering. At the time of its closure to the public in 1949, the museum was not just a place that displayed exhibits, but a dedicated research center that collected historical sources and evidence related to the experiences of the city's defenders and civilian population alike. The direct involvement of the local party bosses in the development of the museum was the main reason for its destruction, which, along with other governmental actions aimed at the ideological cleansing of other Leningrad's institutions involved in the study of the siege, led to the historiographical lacunae and loss of documentation.

The last two chapters switch from the history of institutions to biographical case studies, as the story of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad is not only a case study of the war museum culture in the Soviet Union, but also of the effects of the Leningrad Affair and, in a broader sense, of terror during late Stalinism on members of the intelligentsia who loyally served the state.

Chapter IV focuses on one of the founders of the museum, historian Lev Rakov, exploring his story as a case study of Stalinist terror against historians and the memory of the siege. Using a variety of sources, written by Lev Rakov and about him, I explore how he created the largest wartime museum in the Soviet Union, including his life experiences before and after the war. I demonstrate that despite the prevalence of the top-down perspective of the museum's creation that focuses of the ideology and the involvement of the local party bosses, the personal experiences and initiatives of the museum's organizers are as important as the formerly named factors. I also touch upon the stories of Rakov's associates Mikhail (Moisei) Rabinovich and Sergei Avvakumov. All three men were prosecuted for their work related to the history of the siege. This chapter contributes to the traumatic history of the Leningrad intelligentsia under Stalinism, exploring the strategies that the individuals used to survive, succeed, and create, and the ways in which their efforts were crushed by the Stalinist state.

These themes continue in Chapter V, which takes on the art history and focuses on the artists who designed the Exhibition/Museum of the Defense: Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya. The design of the exhibition was unique in comparison to other wartime displays, as it skillfully combined art, realistic dioramas with sound and light effects, and large weapons in the same space, creating a theatrical effect. The exhibition caused strong emotions and a sense of presence for its visitors; after the beginning of the Leningrad Affair, these features were deemed harmful, formalistic, and undesirable. As artists, Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya, were disciples of Kazimir Malevich, and used his teachings as a basis for their survival skills, as they learned to create in a multitude of mediums, which allowed them to find ways to continuously re-invent themselves as professionals. The chapter, however, investigates not only their successes, but also

their struggles, stress, and a sense of despair that accompanied their creative work and everyday lives as Soviet artists under Stalin.

## Chapter I. Museums of War: Moscow, Kyiv, Minsk

Cheering—he rallies his troops as they give him a rousing ovation:
'Men, this achievement is huge. All fear must be banished from now on.
These spoils, my first fruits of the war, have been reaped from a proud king!
Here is the artwork my hands have created! Behold him, Mezentius!
Now we must march upon one more king and the walls of the Latins.
Ready your weapons! Put war in your souls! Make war what you hope for!

Virgil, *Aeneid*

### *Introduction*

In winter 1945, the Bishop's Council of the Russian Orthodox Church gathered in Moscow (under the control of the secret police) for the selection of the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.[1] The *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchy* reported that on February 1, 1945, honored guests of the Council, including Alexandria and Antioch Patriarchs, visited the exhibition of trophy weapons in Gorky Park, where "while looking at the powerful and complex enemy machines [their] thoughts involuntary turned to our valiant Red Army, that was able to silence such formidable weaponry of the enemy, turning it into a museum's object."[2] In 1945, the exhibition in Gorky Park was one of the most popular sights in Moscow, playing an important role in the Soviet war propaganda machine, as foreign leaders and other important visitors included it in their official agendas. However, merely three years later the exhibition was closed and the majority of its weapons were recycled as scrap metal. The vast majority of other war-themed exhibitions and museums that opened during the war or immediately after, followed the fate of the exhibition at Gorky Park and were quickly closed down during the last years of Stalin's rule.[3]

[1] The Russian Orthodox Church, heavily repressed in the Soviet Union, was rehabilitated during the war, and was treated by Stalin and other Soviet ideologists as a symbol of continuity of Russian tradition and greatness. During the post-war period and subsequent Khrushchev era anti-religion politics were revived.

[2] "Istoricheskie dni," *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarhii*, 1945 no. 2 (February), 77.

[3] Museum Heroic Defense of Odessa, which was modeled after the exhibition of Heroic Defense of Leningrad survived until 1955 when it was reorganized into the Odessa Museum of Regional History. About Odessa's museum

This chapter investigates the development of war-museum culture and its decline during late Stalinism using case studies of three cities: Moscow, Kyiv, and Minsk, examining the exhibitions and museums of two main types: trophy displays and museums of the local wartime history. I argue that the museums of war played an important role in the Soviet propaganda machine's main goal to mobilize the population and, additionally, to create a public historical narrative of the war according to the ideological goals of the state. The museums also worked as a medium for collecting and preserving evidence of the war for posterity. Despite the Soviet state's increasingly centralized ideology in the post war years, this chapter demonstrates the significance of the local initiative, which led not only to the creation of the large network of war exhibitions and museums, but also to significant regional variations in the narratives of the war. Therefore, I argue that the fates of the war-time exhibitions and museums were defined not only by the central policies of the late Stalinist state, but also by regional and local differences within the Union. In order to trace these differences and variations, I will investigate the ways in which the war exhibitions/museums created and conveyed the public historical narrative. My analytical approach to these exhibitions is treating them as narratives of experiences rooted in particular historical time and space.[4]

The developments surrounding the establishment of the war exhibitions and museums and the subsequent closure of the majority of them during the last years of Stalin's rule directly correlated with shifting regime policies vis-à-vis the commemoration of the war. After the war ended, Stalin showed little interest in its commemoration or celebrating its heroes aside from his

see V. Solodova, "Muzeĭ 'Geroicheskai͡a oborona Odessy'," *VISNYK Odes'koho Istoryko-Krai͡eznavchoho Muzei͡u* (vypusk 4), accessed July 16, 2022, http://www.history.odessa.ua/publication4/stat04.htm.

[4] Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition.* (London: Routledge, 1995), 22, 142; Zuzanna Bogumił et al., *The Enemy on Display: The Second World War in Eastern European Museums.* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 1..

own military genius; he even prosecuted over a dozen of his generals, including Georgy Zhukov, during the so-called "trophy affair" or "generals affair."[5] As Nina Tumarkin argues, after the war ended "Stalin wanted his country to curtail talk about the war, to move past the ordeal and on to the tasks of economic reconstruction and the waging of the Cold War against the capitalist nations."[6] The Victory Day on May 9th, considered the most important state holiday in modern Russia, was a working day between 1948 and 1965 and its official celebrations were modest.[7] Historians relate the emergence of the state war cult with developments during the Brezhnev era when victory in the war became a new source of the state's legitimacy;[8] Brezhnev also brought back the Stalin-centered narrative of the war.[9]

The commemoration politics of late Stalinism that limited the official efforts to memorialize the war and celebrate its heroes applied to the war-themed exhibitions and museums. Additionally, these large projects required a significant amount of money and other material resources in a country that required post-war reconstruction. By the end of Stalin's rule, the majority of them were closed, including the exhibitions of trophy weapons in Moscow, Kyiv, and Minsk. Another factor that contributed to the fate of each particular institution was local politics.

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[5] V. S. Abakumov and Oleg Novak *"Trofeĭnoe delo": MGB SSSR 1946-53 gg: arkhivnye dokumenty* (Yekaterinburg, 2020).

[6] Nina Tumarkin, *The Living And the Dead*, 103.

[7] Tumarkin argued that Stalin turned Victory Day celebrations to be largely informal as he wanted to move the ideological focus of the country from military valor to economic and social reconstruction. *The Living and the Dead*, 100-105. Mischa Gabowitsch argued that during late Stalinist and Khrushchev eras the celebrations "were different from what we have come to expect since the 1970s: more regionally diverse, less homogenized, less urban, and addressing a different audience." "Victory Day before the cult: war commemoration in the USSR, 1945–1965," in *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. David L. Hoffmann (Routledge, 2022), 64; Serhy Yekelchyk, analyzing public celebrations in Ukraine under Stalin, argues, in regards to the Victory Day's modest celebrations, that "the evolution of Soviet mass political rituals does not confirm the victory's prominent place in Stalinist ideology." "The Leader, the Victory, and the Nation: Public Celebrations in Soviet Ukraine under Stalin (Kiev, 1943-1953)," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, no. 1 (2006), 10.

[8] E.g. Tumarkin, *The Living And the Dead*, 134. David R. Marples, "Introduction: Historical Memory and the Great Patriotic War," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 54, no. 3/4 (2012), 287-288;

[9] Yan Mann, "Situating Stalin in the history of the Second World War," *The Memory of the Second World War*, 41-64; also see Polly Jones *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (2013).

While the Kyiv Exhibition "Ukrainian Partisans" was closed down in 1950, the Minsk Museum of the Great Patriotic War stayed open until the present day, albeit changing its names and locations. I hypothesize that the explicit narration of the Ukrainian Holocaust and the extensive, although negative, coverage of the Ukrainian nationalist organizations negatively affected the fate of Kyiv's exhibition. In contrast, the Minsk museum did not cover any ideologically dangerous topics. Additionally, the Minsk museum had a strong local patron in Panteleymon Ponomarenko,[10] one of Stalin's favorites; after Ponomarenko's transfer to Moscow, other Belarusian party bosses who had background in the partisan movement were interested in the museum's existence. The Kyivan institution, on the other hand, was lacking such a patron.

Structurally, this chapter opens with an investigation into the early initiatives of war-themed exhibitions throughout the Union and the emergence of the ideology-based content plan; the specific case-studies of the exhibitions and museums are then organized based on city: Moscow, Kyiv, and Minsk. A special section examines the representation of the Holocaust in the museums of Kyiv and Minsk, proving the significance of the regional differences and the absence of a universal approach to Holocaust memorialization in the Soviet Union: while the Kyivan museum presented evidence of the mass extermination of the Jews in Babi Yar, the organizers of the museum in Minsk considered all victims of German atrocities to be "peaceful Soviet citizens" and did not mention specific German policies against the Jews. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the war museums in the post-war period and beyond, including the contemporary developments which stemmed from the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as both states use war-themed exhibitions as a means of propaganda.

[10] Panteleymon Ponomarenko (1902-1984) - the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus in 1938-47, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in the Belarusian SSR in 1944-48, Head of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement in 1942-43 and 1943-44.

***Soviet War Exhibitions in 1941-42: Building the War Narrative***

From the beginning of the German invasion, Soviet propaganda and ideology officials have been concerned with preserving and displaying physical and documentary evidence of the war. The first instruction on preserving war artifacts was issued by the RSFSR *Narkompros* (The People's Commissariat for Education) three weeks after the start of the war on July 15, 1941. In the spirit of total war, the directive addressed all staff of the museums in the system of the RSFSR *Narkompros*, who were called to direct all of their work to the interests of the war effort.[11] *Narkompros* suggested a few avenues of work. First, the museums were to create exhibitions, both stationary and mobile, that demonstrated the "heroic past of the peoples of the USSR and the greatness of the Russian weapon," focusing on Germanic invasions.[12] The brochure included a detailed content plan of such exhibitions, recounting historical episodes from the Battle on the Ice of 1242 to the Brusilov Offensive during the First World War. The museums were to propagate the great military leaders of the Russian people, including Alexander Nevsky, Admiral Pavel Nakhimov, and Alexander Suvorov, in addition to the Soviet generals, especially Joseph Stalin. This paradigm was drawn directly from Molotov's radio speech that he gave on the first day of the war: "At the time of Napoleon's invasion of Russia our people's reply was war for the fatherland, and Napoleon suffered defeat and met his doom. It will be the same with Hitler, who in his arrogance has proclaimed a new crusade against our country."[13] The same motifs were present in Stalin's first war-time address to the Soviet people on July 3, in which he referred to the victories

[11] *Ko Vsem Rabotnikam Muzeev Narkomprosa RSFSR* (Moscow: Narodnyĭ komissariat prosveshcheniia. Muzeĭno-kraevedcheskiĭ otdel., 1941).
[12] Ibid, 2.
[13] "Molotov: Reaction to German Invasion of 1941," Fordham University Modern History Sourcebook, accessed July 15, 2022, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1941molotov.asp

of the Russian army over Napoleon and Wilhelm II.[14] This rhetoric emphasizing pre-revolutionary Russian greatness was a part of the so-called National Bolshevik line that began to pervade state propaganda in the mid-1930s, reaching its peak during the war.[15] As historian David Brandenberger noted, "within days of the start of the war, prominent historians were enlisted to detail the rich military history of the Soviet peoples throughout the ages, particularly Kutuzov's routing of Napoleon in 1812 and Aleksander Nevsky's 1242 victory over the Teutonic Knights."[16] The same instructions were given to the museums in the *Narkompros* directive.[17]

Second, the directive instructed museums to create special exhibitions about current war events focusing on local heroes. According to Karel Berkhoff, Soviet propaganda at the beginning of the war glorified "soldiers who performed a feat of arms and survived," but soon shifted to dead heroes who sacrificed themselves.[18] Finally, the museum staff were specifically called to collect

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[14] Stalin's speech on November 7, 1941 referred to an extended list of "our great ancestors" that should inspire the Soviet people. The list included Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dmitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov, and Mikhail Kutuzov. About the influence of this speech see Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*,151-157. Brandenberger argues that "museums complemented propaganda efforts with exhibitions devoted to similar themes." Ibid., 152.

[15] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 2. Also see Brandenberger, D. L., and A. M. Dubrovsky. "'The People Need a Tsar': The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941." *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): 873–92; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2018), ch.10, 394–431.

[16] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 116. Serhy Yekelchyk argues that the ideological campaign that glorified Russian imperial past during the war and post-war years "re-educated the peoples of the USSR to identify with the Soviet present and the Russian imperial past" at the expense of their own national (i.e. non-Russian) histories. Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press., 2004), 71.

[17] During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kremlin's ideologists also directed its propagandists to refer to the war as a battle between Russian and the "collective West" and use the figure of Alexander Nevsky as a historical leader who defeated the Teutonic Knights who unified the society. Andreĭ Pertsev, "V Kremle podgotovili novuiu metodichku o tom, kak propaganda dolzhna rasskazyvat′ o voĭne," *Meduza*, August 1, 2022, https://meduza.io/feature/2022/08/01/v-kremle-podgotovili-novuyu-metodichku-o-tom-kak-propaganda-dolzhna-rasskazyvat-o-voyne-my-ee-prochitali

[18] Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 59. On heroes, also see Rosalinde Sartori, "On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); Mark Edele, "Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero According to Soviet Wartime Posters," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 47, no. 1 (1999): 89–108; about the female heroine see Anja Tippner, "Girls in Combat: Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia and the Image of Young Soviet Wartime Heroines," *The Russian Review* 73, no. 3 (2014): 371–88.

current war material and artifacts in the form of letters from local servicemen, Soviet propaganda materials, such as posters, photos, newspaper cartoons, and documents written by military specialists and other written testimonies.[19] All of the exhibitions were to be "saturated with materials exposing vile fascism"[20] and coordinated with local party organizations and, if needed, military command. Museums and exhibitions were considered by the Soviet officials an important propaganda tool that was used to mobilize the people during the war and to control and shape the collective memory in "real time." By providing detailed instructions on how and what to collect and display, the Soviet state aimed to control the work of the museum staff who were called to the ideological war front. Despite these top-down directives, the staff of the museums implemented their own initiatives from the very first days of the war. While the *Narkompros* directive was issued on July 15th, the Soviet museums began to operate war-themed exhibitions as early as June 24th. Russian historian Yulia Kantor argued that unlike the Commander-in-Chief who stayed silent for an "unforgivably long time," the museum workers began a conversation with their visitors from the very first days of the war and were instrumental in propagating the topic of the heroic past.[21]

The exhibitions that were opened at the beginning of the war particularly emphasized the glorious past of the Russian people, since the reflection of current events was ideologically impossible due to the initial retreat and losses of the Red Army.[22] The ideology was perfectly suited for many museums as they could use the artwork and historical objects that already existed

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[19] *Ko Vsem Rabotnikam Muzeev Narkomprosa RSFSR*, 10.

[20] About portrayal of the enemy and its dehumanization in the Soviet wartime propaganda see Argyrios K. Pisiotis, "Images of Hate in the Art of War," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ch.9.

[21] Yu. Z. Kantor, "'Prostranstvo pami͡ati' o Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭne: goszakaz i muzeĭnai͡a intelligent͡sii͡a v 1941–1945-e gody," in *Kul'tura i vlast' v SSSR. 1920–1950-e gody: Materialy IX mezhdunarodnoĭ nauchnoĭ konferent͡sii. Sankt-Peterburg, 24–26 okti͡abri͡a 2016 g.* (Moscow, 2016), 81.

[22] Press censorship banned any news of war losses, or any positive information about the enemy. See Berkhoff Karel C., *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 35–68; also Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), ch. 7.

in their collections. For example, the exhibition that was opened in Moscow's State Historical Museum in August 1941 displayed materials about the heroic struggle of the Russian people against the German invaders of the past and featured the silver trumpets received by the Petersburg Carabinieri regiment for the raid of Berlin in 1760 during the Seven Years' War.[23] The exhibition also displayed hastily produced art, including Alexander Gerasimov's monumental "Meeting of the State Defense Committee," and other materials related to the current war, such as photographs depicting the heroics of the Red Army and Fleet. Similar exhibitions were opened in many locations around the Union, and, when available, included trophy weapons.[24] The museum workers also created smaller mobile displays that toured the active military units in order to encourage the soldiers.


Figure 1.1 Soldiers at the Leningrad front are looking at the mobile exhibition "Heroic Past of the Russian People." TASS, December 1941. Courtesy of the National Library of Russia.

[23] *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 August 1941.

[24] See N.V. Fatigarova, "Muzeĭnoe Delo v RSFSR v Gody Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny (Aspekty Gosudarstvennoĭ Politiki)," in Muzeĭ i Vlast′. Gosudarstvennai͡a Politika v Oblasti Muzeĭnogo Dela (XVIII—XX Vv.) (Moscow, 1991), 193–95; M.P. Simkin, "Sovetskie Muzei v Period Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny," in *Trudy Nauchno-Issledovatel'skogo Instituta Muzeevedenii͡a*, II (Moscow, 1961), 207–9.

As the war progressed and military fortunes turned around after the Battle of Moscow, the content of the exhibitions switched from emphasizing the past to representing the events of the present. One of the official documents developed by a museum methodologist in 1942 suggested the following content plan of a war exhibition:[25]

1. USSR is the country of victorious socialism;
2. Treacherous attack of the Nazi Germany and its allies on the Soviet Union;
3. Fascism is the worst enemy of the Soviet people and the whole humanity;
4. Failure of the blitzkrieg;
5. Offensive of the Red Army;
6. Idea that the protection of the Motherland creates heroes;
7. All resources of the country – to help the front;
8. Defeat of the German invaders and their armies;
9. We beat them in the past, we beat them now, and will beat them in the future.[26]

These, and similar instructions, developed by the museum specialists and vetted by the propaganda officials in Moscow were sent out to the networks of local museums around the Union.

[25] Georgiĭ N. Serebrennikov, *O pokaze v muzeĭno-vystavochnoĭ ėkspozit͡sii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny sovetskogo naroda s nemet͡skimi zakhvatchikami*, Narkompros RSFSR, Muzeĭno-kraeved. otdel. N.-i. in-t kraeved. i muzeĭnoĭ raboty. (Moscow, 1942).

[26] Compare with the Second World War UK slogan "We beat 'em before. We'll beat 'em again," with "before" referring to the First World War victory over Germany.


Figure 1.2 Poster with the slogan "We beat them in the past, we beat them now, and will beat them in the future," artist Vladimir Serov, 1941. Courtesy of the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library.

After the offensive campaign of the Red Army in 1942, the war-time exhibitions began to include a large amount of trophies. The war propaganda apparatus, tasked with motivating Soviet citizens to fight at the front or work in the rear to help the war effort used trophy weapons to demonstrate the enemy's strength through its powerful equipment. The message was clear: everyone must contribute to the war efforts in order to win. At the same time, the mere fact that the deadly weapons were captured and exhibited for the public served as powerful testimony to the enemy's vulnerability, thus boosting the confidence of the Soviet citizens in their inevitable victory. As seen below, the seized weapons were sometimes viewed as surrogates for the actual enemy, the people who used them, when they were described in the press as possessing anthropomorphic or zoomorphic features.

The tradition of trophy displays goes back to the Roman times, when "the loot that was paraded through Rome in triumphal procession was often donated to the Roman public by wealthy

benefactors and placed on public exhibition."[27] Using displays of captured enemy arms to invoke patriotism has been a feature of various states throughout the world's history. During World War I, the Imperial War Museum, established in 1917 in London, became the nation's official memorial to the war and displayed a variety of items, including art, materials on medical services and women's work, munitions, and a large amount of captured trophies.[28] In Saint-Petersburg, the Russian Imperial Capital, the exhibition "War and Our Trophies" during the same war was more modest, although its organizers meant for it to be a basis for the future museum of the Great War. It was opened temporarily in the summer of 1915; one of its organizers, historian Mikhail Sokolovsky reported that "the main mass of the visitors were the lower class people [*chernyĭ liud*], whose understanding of the war is the biggest guarantee of our success.[29]" Sokolovsky then described the war as having a significant internal, historical sense due to being a continuation of the ancient battle between "Slavicism and Germanism," and invoked the memory of the victorious Alexander Nevsky at the Battle on the Ice.[30] Stalin's ideologists borrowed their nationalist rhetoric directly from their predecessors working for the Russian ancien régime.

The creation of military museums and exhibitions across the Union during various stages of the Second World War was directly connected with the creation of a specialized system engaged with the collecting and sorting of trophies and other valuables left on the battlefield.[31] The trophy system was not in place at the beginning of the war, which caused many weapons to go to waste

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[27] Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," 449.

[28] Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum." *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 77–97.

[29] M. K. Sokolovskiĭ, *Voĭna i nashi trofeĭ* (Petrograd, 1915), 1.

[30] Ibid., 3.

[31] On the history of the trophy service, see S.K. Kurkotkin, ed. *Tyl sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* 1941–1945 gg. (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), 373-385; A.V. Zotova, Poltorak S.N., "Activity of the State Defense Committee on the Use of Trophies During the Great Patriotic War," *Vestnik Volgogradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2017): 126-135; S.G. Bandurin, V.F. Vorsin, "Dejatel'nost' sovetskoj trofejnoj sluzhby v 1941-1945 gg.," *Voenno-istoricheskij zhurnal*, no. 12 (2018): 49-56.

or to end up in the hands of the general population.[32] During the first months of the war, the military command issued a number of orders to organize the collection of trophies, scrap metals and other items from the battlefields.[33] By the end of 1941, the lack of a central army system devoted to the task and specialized personnel in the regiments presented a serious challenge for the army leadership, which was increasingly concerned with unaccounted weaponry being collected by civilians.[34]

The Battle of Moscow and subsequent counter-offensive campaign of winter 1941-1942 turned the fortunes for the Red Army after the devastating losses of the first months of the war. The Soviet successes during the Battle of Moscow were important not only from the military strategic perspective, but also were crucial for the war propaganda machine. All around the Union, local propaganda and agitation departments within the Party and the Army were hosting rallies to celebrate the achievements of the Red Army and educate the population and the troops on the significance of the Battle of Moscow. The documentary film *Defeat of the German Forces Near Moscow* (released in the USA on October 1, 1942 under the name *Moscow Strikes Back*)[35] was

[32] Trophy taking by the party who seizes it in international armed conflicts is customarily accepted as war booty. J. Henckaerts et. al. "Destruction and Seizure of Property (Rules 49–52)," in *Customary International Humanitarian Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 173-185.

[33] E.g. see the order of General Khrulev, Head of the Rear of the Red Army from August 1, 1941 "On the Organization of Collection of Property and Weapons from the Battlefields," TsAMO RF, f. 213, op. 2026, d. 1, ll. 6-7, in *Tyl Krasnoi Armii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine 1941–1945 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* , ed. P. I. Veshchikov et al., vol. 25 (14) of Russkii arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia (Moscow, TERRA, 1998), 102-103.

[34] See the order by the NKO (People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR) from December 18, 1941 issued by Khrulev, "Of Evacuation of Trophy Property," TsAMO RF, f. 229, op. 178 d. 10, ll. 134-135, in P.N. Knyshevskii, *Skrytaia pravda voĭny: 1941 god: neizvestnye dokumenty* (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1992), 316-317 and Khrulev's memo to Stalin from January 16, 1942, RGASPI f. 644, op. 2, d. 33, l. 136.

[35] Film *Moscow Strikes Back*, 1942, Artkino Pictures, Inc, Internet Archive, accessed on July 15, 2022, https://archive.org/details/MoscowStrikesBack. The movie won the Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1943. See N. A. Izvolov et.al, *"Razgrom nemetskih voisk pod Moskvoj". Triumf po obe storony okeana (*Moscow: VGIK, 2017).

broadly released on February 18, 1942.[36] Stalin personally ordered the filming of the documentary in Fall 1941 and personally oversaw and controlled its production.[37]

Retreating Germans left the Soviets an incredible amount of trophies, which increased proportionately with the military fortunes of the Red Army. Simultaneously, army units and various museums were organizing trophy weapon displays and exhibitions to visually demonstrate the enemy's losses. Many displays were mobile and toured factories and villages, attracting thousands of visitors.[38] Trophies were becoming an increasingly prominent feature of war exhibitions across the Union.

Another organization that was called to gather and preserve materials and documents on the war and its participants was the Commission on the History of the Great Patriotic War (further - Commission).[39] In November 1941 during the defensive stage of the Battle of Moscow, Alexander Shcherbakov[40] suggested to create a commission responsible for gathering materials

[36] "88 tysjachi moskvichej smotreli vchera fil'm 'Razgrom nemeckih vojsk pod Moskvoj'," *Pravda*, no. 51 (8822), February 20, 1942.

[37] Peter Kenez noted of the documentary: "The film did not intend to relate the actual course of the battle and showed not a single map. The most effective scenes, according to contemporary observers, were the ones showing defeated, bedraggled and obviously humiliated German soldiers led through the capital by their victorious captors. The audiences desperately wanted to be reassured that Nazis could be defeated, and now here was visual evidence: the Germans were not supermen." "Black and White: The War on Film," in *Culture And Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ch. 10, 162.

[38] See G. D. Komkov. *Na Ideologicheskom fronte Velikoj Otechestvennoj*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 106-107.

[39] The Archive of the Commission is kept at the Archive of the Institute of the Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Currently, the materials of the Commission are divided into fourteen thematic parts ranging from large collections on the History of the Military Units (Part I), History of the Partisan Movements (II), Defense of the Cities (III) and Heroes of the Soviet Union (part IV), to the smaller Culture and Everyday Life during the War (Part VIII) and Military Economy (Part V). See the website of the Commission's archive, http://komiswow.ru/, Komissiia po istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny, accessed July 16, 2022.

[40] Alexander Shcherbakov (1901–1945), was a founding member of the Soviet Writers' Union, along with Maxim Gorky, and a prominent party apparatchik and propagandist. During the war Shcherbakov was a director of the Soviet Information Bureau and served as the head of the political directorate of the Red Army since July 1942. Shcherbakov was the Head of the Moscow Party Committee since 1938 and was one of the most important people in the city during its defense in Fall-Winter 1941-42.

about the defense of Moscow. Soviet propaganda officials immediately realized the importance of this job and quickly expanded the scope of it beyond Moscow to the whole Union.[41]

One of the spheres of interests of the Commission was the History of the Partisan Movement ( documents were collected and organized based on geographical location - by oblasts and republics), and the two largest collections of documents on the partisan movement were related to Ukraine and Belarus.[42] Soviet propaganda presented partisans as a mass nation-wide movement fully supported by civilians, which was not always the case, considering that the main goal of the partisans was to actively fight the Germans rather than helping the general population. Leaders of the partisan movement were praised as folk heroes by the Soviet state and many held powerful positions after the war. They were personally invested in their portrayal in the war museums as demonstrated below on both the Kyivan and Minsk examples.

***Moscow***

The history of the grandiose weapon display in Gorky Park goes back to the successes of the Red Army during the Battle of Moscow and is directly connected with the establishment of the State Trophy Committee. The large exhibition "Defeat of the German Forces near Moscow" opened on February 22, 1942 (eve of the Day of the Red Army) at the Central House of the Red Army, which hosted smaller trophy displays from the first months of the war along with the Central Museum of the Red Army located in the same building.[43] The exhibition narrated the story of the

[41] On the history of the Commission see N.S. Arkhangorodskai͡a, Kurnosov A.A., "O sozdanii Komissii po istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny AN SSSR i ee arkhiva (K 40-letiiu so dni͡a obrazovaniі͡a)," A*rkheograficheskiĭ Ezhegodnik za 1981*, (Moscow, 1982), 219-229; A.A. Kurnosov, "Vospominaniі͡a - interv'iu v fonde Komissii po istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny Akademii Nauk SSSR (organizat͡siі͡a i metodika sobiraniі͡a)," *Arkheograficheskiĭ Ezhegodnik za 1973*, (Moscow, 1974), 118-131; B.V. Levshin, "Dei͡atel'nost' Komissii po istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny. 1941-1945,"*Istoriі͡a i istoriki*, *1974* (Moscow, 1976), 312-317.

[42] Part II of the archival collection contains materials on the partisan movements and has 22 inventories with 1,377 documents total. The collection on Ukrainian partisans contains 405 documents, Belarusian – 336, Smolensk oblast - 124. "Razdel II 'Partizanskoe dvizhenie,'" Komissiі͡a po istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny, accessed March 16, 2021, http://komiswow.ru/?q=r2.

[43] *Krasnaya Zvezda*, No. 189 (4944), August 14, 194.

Battle of Moscow in a chronological order. The first room was devoted to the preparations for the defense of the capital in October 1941, featuring photos of workers, volunteer corps, women building the fortifications, and barricaded streets. The visitor then saw evidence of the destruction in the areas surrounding Moscow, including Anton Chekhov's destroyed house in Istra, the vandalized house of Pyotr Tchaikovsky in Klin, and Leo Tolstoy's looted and burned Yasnaya Polyana estate. The exhibition featured letters written by the people to Stalin requesting to be drafted to the Army and asking for vengeance against the Nazis for "burnt villages and killed relatives."[44]

A scheme of "Stalin's plan" of Moscow's defense was displayed on a large banner next to the portraits of the generals (Zhukov, Belov, Rokossovsky, Panfilov) who carried out the plan. Stalin and his military genius were at the center of the exhibition, as described by a journalist:

> The Nazis dreamed of putting our Moscow through fire and sword, but everyone who was within the walls of the great city and far beyond them knew: Stalin was in Moscow, and that meant that the great Soviet capital was not to be conquered. And, as it happened before, at difficult times for the country, the people rallied even closer behind their leader. With the people he shared his innermost desires, to the people he confided his thoughts. Stalin called on the people to defend Moscow. And the people answered their leader.[45]

The exhibition also featured trophies captured from the Germans or left on the battlefields. One of the showcases displayed clothes and shoes of the German soldiers before and after the battle – solid boots were replaced by the felted bast-shoes, new uniforms turned into "dirty rags." Another showcase demonstrated a "whole pile" of Iron Crosses. The largest trophy items were displayed at the park in front of the Central House of the Army - large howitzers, tanks, armored vehicles, motorcycles, and even inflatable boats.

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[44] S. Dangulov, "Razgrom nemeckih okkupantov pod Moskvoj," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, No. 49 (5113), February 28, 1942, 4.
[45] Ibid.

Author and war veteran Vyacheslav Kondratiev described visiting the exhibition in his novella *Injury Leave* (*Otpusk po raneniju*). The protagonist and author's alter ego, Volod'ka, is injured in the battle of Rzhev and returns home to Moscow after a hospital stay. He visits the park of the Central House of the Army, which he frequented before the war. Now, the park is empty with the exception of the exhibition of the trophy weapons located at the former ice rink area which attracts visitors, "mostly servicemen and teenagers." In describing the weapons, Kondratiev emphasizes the strength of the enemy, who "prepared properly" for the war, but simultaneously its inferiority, reflected in the defeated, "no longer scary" equipment:

> Volod'ka looked with a strange feeling at the German tanks, guns, airplanes, machines – they seemed invulnerable near Rzhev, but now they looked completely different: broken, damaged, crumpled, they were no longer scary. But ... but to destroy all this, you need the same weapons, the same tanks, the same aircraft. […]
> Near the tracked armored vehicle, someone asked him:
> - Do we have these?
> - No.
> - Yes, this bastard Hitler prepared properly, said the person with a sigh.[46]

On March 22, 1942 the State Defense Committee (GKO – *Gosudarstvenny Komitet Oborony*) issued a resolution "On organizing the collection and conveyance of trophy property and scrap metals."[47] The resolution established two separate Central Commissions (for trophies and for scrap metals) that were to report directly to the GKO. The Central Commission for collection of trophies was led by Marshal Semyon Budenny and was tasked with collecting, sorting and organizing repairs of the weapons, as well as accounting and planning for the further usage of the enemy's weapons and other valuable property left on the battlefield. The resolution established special units at various levels of the rear management and allowed for the need-based formation of special companies (200 people), responsible for the collection and sorting of The GKO, and

[46] Vyacheslav Kondratiev, "Otpusk po raneniju," in *Privet s fronta*: *povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow, 1995), 311-312.
[47] RGASPI f. 644, op. 1, d. 25, ll. 17-20.

also ordered to create a Museum of Trophy Weapons at the Central House of the Red Army under the umbrella of the Trophy Commission.

A year later, on April 5, 1943, after the success of the Battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943) and subsequent start of the Soviet offensive campaign, two trophy Commissions were reorganized into a single Trophy Committee, headed by Marshal Kliment Voroshilov.[48] The Committee was awarded significant powers and resources, since the trophies were not just scraps and damaged weapons anymore; as the Red Army was winning more battles and advancing further west, the captured trophy property included factory equipment, trains, horses and other animals, and even timber. [49] By 1944, when the Soviet army entered enemy territories and captured property including art and other historical and cultural valuables, the trophy committee was reformed again to expand its responsibilities and respective personnel.

The resolution on the establishment of the Trophy Committee in April 1943 also included an order to organize a "Museum-exhibition" of trophy weapons and to close down the existing museum at the Central House of the Red Army. In the April 10 report to Stalin, Kliment Voroshilov suggested to open a new museum at the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Leisure.[50] Three days later, Stalin's GKO issued a resolution to open the museum at Gorky Park on June 15, 1943 and assigned Voroshilov's protégé general-lieutenant Rafail P. Khmelnitsky as its head.[51]

In less than a month, the Trophy Committee submitted a plan of the grandiose Museum-exhibition to the GKO.[52] The goal of the Museum-exhibition was defined simply: "to show the

[48] Resolution "On the Trophy Committee of the State Defense Committee," RGASPI f. 644, op. 2, d. 149, l. 116.
[49] On April 19, 1943 the GKO issued a detailed document in addition to the Resolution from April 5 titled "On Improving Collection and Conveyance of Trophy Property and Scrap Metals from the Battlefield," RGASPI f. 644, op. 2, d. 159, ll. 89-95.
[50] RGASPI, f. 644, op. 2. d. 154, l. 181.
[51] Ibid, l. 179.
[52] RGASPI, f. 644, op. 2, d. 166, ll. 9–32.

trophy weaponry and equipment captured by the Red Army, as a demonstration of the force and power of the Red Army." The exhibition that demonstrated the invincibility of the Soviet force was also supposed to remind the visitors of the strength of the enemy and the difficult challenge ahead of the nation: "This struggle will require time, sacrifices, exertion of our forces and the mobilization of all our possibilities."[53]

The Trophy Committee suggested the Museum-exhibition to be designed in an "artistic, architectural, and agitational fashion (*агитационно, архитектурно, и художественно*)," using various media such as posters, art, slogans, sculptures, and banners. However, Stalin's pencil crossed out the majority of the creative suggestions and the final version of the design section of the plan laconically said: "The territory of the Museum-exhibition should be designed artistically, *where possible.*"[54] Perhaps, Stalin preferred the weapons of war to speak for themselves.

Stalin made another interesting edit that spoke to his desire to make the exhibition accessible, perhaps in order to increase its popularity. In the section of the plan that set the admission prices, the "father of the peoples" reduced the price of general admission from one ruble to 50 kopecks.[55] Stalin's generosity ended there – he crossed out suggested discounts for children and groups, as well as free admission for servicemembers and war invalids, who were now expected to pay 10 kopecks for their tickets, possibly to keep idle wanderers away .[56]

On June 22, 1943, on the second anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the exhibition of the trophy weapons opened at Gorky Park in Moscow. The exhibition of

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[53] The plan cited Stalin's speech from February 23, 1943. Translation from *Soviet Union. Soviet War Documents: Addresses, Notes, Orders Of The Day, Statements.* (Washington, D.C.: Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1943), 50.

[54] RGASPI, f. 644, op. 2, d. 166, l. 10. Emphasis mine.

[55] For context, the official cost of a liter of milk during the war was 2 rubles, although that price was only valid with the special ration card – the average price of a liter of milk at the kolkhoz markets was around 45 rubles. The average monthly salary in 1940 was about 339 rubles. There are 100 kopecks in a ruble.

[56] Ibid, l. 22.

incredible scale had six departments: artillery, aviation, automotive, armored weapons, engineering, and the rear. The large objects, such as planes, tanks, and other heavy equipment were placed in the open air spaces of the Park and along the banks of the Moskva River, while the smaller items, such as clothing, rifles, and medals, were on display in two roofed pavilions.

L. Beria, S. Mikoyan, L. Voroshilov, and J. Stalin at the trophy exhibition at Gorky Park. Moscow, 1943. Courtesy of the Gorky Park Archive.

The exhibition demonstrated the resilience of the ordinary Soviet people fighting the extremely powerful enemy. The visitors of the exhibition, who privately reflected on their impressions, noted the visible strength of the enemy's weapons and emphasized the strength and desperation of the Soviet people beating the invader. Writer Mikhail Prishvin (1873-1953) visited the exhibition in August 1943 and remarked:

> Yesterday we were at a trophy exhibition and marveled at the German weapons and asked ourselves, amazed, how are we defeating them, with what [equipment]. And, after thinking it over, we came to the conclusion that while it was difficult to invent these instruments of death, it was an exceptional kind of work to make our own, according to these samples, while worse, cheaper, but also terrifying, especially in the hands of a *person who has nothing to lose.*[57]

[57] M.M. Prishvin, *Dnevniki. 1942-1943* (Moscow, 2012), 556. Emphasis mine.

Prishvin's friend, writer Leonid Leonov (1899-1994), who visited the exhibition a month prior, described the incredible strength of the German tanks noting the adaptability of the people fighting against them in a private letter:

> These "tigers" are such an unpleasant thing, armor thicker than a fist, living space for three [persons] on wheels. And from there [sticks out] in a phallic way a kind of iron thing, a boring object, to put it bluntly. But, since they also get shot through, it means that something happened to a person: obviously, he got used to it and adapted once again. What a tenacious beast, huh?[58]

Ilya Ehrenburg, writer and war correspondent of *Krasnaya Zvezda*, was perhaps the most powerful voice of Soviet wartime propaganda, extremely popular among both soldiers and civilian population alike.[59] Being an avid reader of German soldiers' letters and diaries, he used the captured documents and interviews with German prisoners of war in his columns and articles to argue in favor of the enemy's moral and cultural inferiority.[60] His column reviewing the exhibition was featured on the newspaper's page announcing its opening.

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[58] July 19, 1943 Letter from Leonid Leonov to S.Z. Samoylov, cited in Vladimir Desyatnikov, *Dnevnik Russkogo. Tom 3* (Moscow, 2011), 399

[59] Alexander Werth attributed a "central place in the battle for Red Army morale" to Ehrenburg. *Russia at War, 1941–1945* (New York: Dutton, 1964), 411. Also see Joshua Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

[60] See Jochen Hellbeck, "'The Diaries of Fritzes and the Letters of Gretchens': Personal Writings from the German–Soviet War and Their Readers*," Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 10, Number 3, (Summer 2009, New Series): 588-598. Hellbeck argues that "Ehrenburg […] fought an assumption widespread among Soviet propagandists as well as corresponding Red Army soldiers, that the mass of the German army consisted of oppressed and misguided working-class soldiers who would quickly understand the delusional war aims of Nazi Germany and convert to the Soviet cause. No, the fascist ideology organically sprang from deep-rooted, inherently German ideas of cultural and racial superiority. […] It was Ehrenburg's achievement to fuse the words "German" and "Fascist" in his Soviet readers' imagination." "The Diaries of Fritzes," 590. By the end of the war Ehrenburg's stance was contradicting the Soviet government's positioning of the Red Army as liberating Germans from the Nazism. He was famously critiqued by the head of the Central Committee's Propaganda and Agitation Department Georgy Aleksandrov: "Comrade Ehrenburg assures his readers that all Germans are the same and that they will all be equally responsible for the crimes of the Nazis. In the article "Enough!" he said that "Germany does not exist: there is a colossal gang that scatters when it comes to responsibility." […] It is not difficult to demonstrate that this argument of Comrade Ehrenburg does not correspond to the facts. Now everyone has become convinced, and this became very clear from the experience of recent months, that different Germans fight differently and behave differently." G. Aleksandrov, "Tovarish Ehrenburg uproshchaet," *Pravda*, April 14, 1945.

Ehrenburg's article about the new exhibition interprets it from the perspective familiar to his reader – Germans are corrupt at their core, and so are their weapons. He asks: how could the Germans, with their "arrogance and cowardice, greed, shamelessness, and stupidity," as reflected in their diaries or seen in prisoners of war, "capture ten countries, crawl all the way to Egypt, reach the Caucasus?" He suggested to look for an answer at the exhibition of the trophies. "[German] industry, technical prowess, years of experience, diligence – it was all about one thing: the upcoming attack. […] If there are still careless or naïve people among us, by visiting the exhibition they will see the enemy against whom we are leading the deathly fights. Our country was invaded by the multimillion army that possesses high quality equipment."[61]

Ehrenburg described the highlights of the exhibition – tanks and planes, as if they had anthropomorphic personalities, humiliated by the wartime losses, and zoomorphic features.[62] By animating the deadly machines and weapons, Ehrenburg treated them as a proxy for the real, human enemy – Hitler and his troops:

> German planes. We saw them often in our sky. Sometimes we would admire their *skeletons* on the ground. At the exhibition they stand unharmed and *humiliated* – they were captured right in *their nests*. *Bandit birds* with disgusting swastikas on their sides.
> Here is the "*star of the season*" – a heavy German tank. The Germans called it the Tiger. It is bulky and unwieldy. The Germans drew an elephant on the Tiger, but it looks more like a hippopotamus, painted by a cubist artist. This Tiger is *wounded* by a fallen shell and its wound reminds us that even *the Tiger won't carry Hitler out of trouble*.[63]

The very sight of the captured weapons and defeated planes and tanks was supposed to proclaim the strength of the Red Army, which was able to overcome and defeat the powerful enemy. The moral inferiority of the enemy was reflected in the defeat of its weapons. Ehrenburg

[61] Ilya Ehrengburg, "Dva Goda," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, June 22, 1943, 1.
[62] Zoomorphism was also prominent when describing the enemy itself, see Pisiotis, "Images of Hate,"146.
[63] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

emphasized that the real center of the exhibition are the soldiers of the Red Army who took the trophies and now came to see them, *wounded* and *humiliated*.

> No matter how significant the role of technology in modern warfare is, the outcome of a battle, the outcome of a war depends on a person. […]
> A person will win. The equipment of the Red Army, the maturity of our commanders, the courage of our soldiers decided the fate of Paulus. They will also decide the fate of Hitler. They are here, at the exhibition, our gallant front-line soldiers, well-aimed artillerymen, fearless pilots, sappers walking through minefields, tankmen, […], and wonderful infantry, infantry, that had no equal. They are here, our people. They took these trophies. They will also take the victory.
> We now know that the hour of reckoning is near. This is evidenced by the tried-with-fire, weather-beaten, sunburned soldier who looks at the German Tiger *trapped in a cage* and grins.[64]

Similar large trophy exhibitions were established in Minsk and Kyiv shortly after their liberation from German occupation. The general structure of these exhibitions followed Moscow's example: large weapons, like tanks, planes, and engineering equipment were kept outdoors while smaller items were placed in roofed pavilions.

***Kyiv***

The Red Army liberated Kyiv from German occupation on November 6, 1943. Four months later, on March 14th, the Ukrainian *Radnarkom* (Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR), then led by Nikita Khrushchev, issued an order to organize the exhibition of trophy weapons and equipment in Kyiv's Pushkinsky Park under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel N. Nikonishin. The proposed location had one issue – during the occupation the park was used as a cemetery for hundreds of German soldiers. In the beginning of the summer of 1944, German prisoners of war were brought to the park to conduct the job of exhumation of their compatriots' bodies and reburying them in the communal graves in the Syrets area,[65] where the

[64] Ibid. Emphasis mine.
[65] Dmitro Malakov, "Kyi'vs'ki trofejni vystavky," *Vijs'kovo–istorychnyj al'manah*, 2001, year II, No. 1(2), 155.

German concentration camp operated from 1941-1943, just a few hundred meters away from Babi Yar, the site of Nazi massacres. [66] After the reburial was completed, tanks, airplanes, and other heavy equipment and weapons captured by the Red Army from the Germans were brought to the park.

The exhibition opened on February 23, 1945, the day of the Red Army. As in Moscow's Gorky Park, the majority of the exhibits were placed outside, but there was also a roofed pavilion that displayed small items like documents, banners, clothes, and military decorations. Shortly after its opening, *Pravda Ukrainy* reported that the exhibition had around 5,000 artifacts on display - samples of artillery, heavy armored equipment, aviation, chemical and other types of weapons, and other miscellanea captured from the Germans.[67]

Visitors walking the alleys of the park saw heavy and anti-aircraft artillery systems, large modern howitzers and outdated cannons from the World War I era, tanks and armored personnel carriers. The central square of the park hosted aircrafts, such as the *Junkers*, the *Messerschmitts,* the *Focke-Wulfs,* and an Italian transport plane *Savoia-Marchetti,* captured by the Slovaks who collaborated with the Soviet partisans.[68] As the war theater moved west, tanks and planes began to arrive from the battles on German soil. A highlight of the exhibition were the V-1 flying bombs, that the Soviets captured near Polish Katowice; "the Germans mostly used them against the civilian population of England and London neighborhoods." [69]

Author and war correspondent Mikhail Tardov wrote a review of the exhibition in *Pravda Ukrainy* that resembles Ehrenburg's sentiments and his animalistic metaphors:

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[66] Stanislav Aristov, "Next to Babi Yar: The Syrets Concentration Camp and the Evolution of Nazi Terror in Kyiv." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29, no. 3 (2015): 431-459.

[67] L. Marchenko, "Na vystavke trofejnogo vooruzhenija," *Pravda Ukrainy*, March 15th 1945, 3.

[68] N. Nikonishin, Trofei velikikh bitv, *Pravda Ukrainy*, February 23rd, 1945, 4.

[69] A. Vladimirov, "Samolety-snaryady Fau-1," *Pravda Ukrainy*, April 5th, 1945, 3.

> All of this destroyed, completely neutralized equipment of the enemy will serve not only as a reminder of the passed danger, but above all is a symbol of the approaching defeat and destruction of the *fascist beast in his own den*, a symbol of the triumph of historical justice.
> The Germans preferred military equipment to anything else. They worshiped the tank and the cannon. They were afraid of a person, with his soul and mind. Their soldiers are *automatons that came alive* with steel automatic weapons around their necks. Wild predators were blood relatives of the *fascist hyenas*. No wonder the German tanks and cannons were named "Tigers" and "Panthers."
> In their wild dreams, the fascists have already seen themselves as the rulers of the world and the sweetness of their absurd dreams embodied in caressing nicknames given to armored monsters. Nazis called one of the mortar systems "Püppchen!" Dolly!
> Behind this sickening sentimental nickname is the psychology of a sadist-misanthropist […].
> Neither the "Panthers" nor the "Tigers" helped the Germans. […]
> *All the steel monsters* were powerless against the heroism of the Soviet soldiers and officers, against the greatness of the spirit of our people, who fight and conquer, faithful to the call of the great leader, Comrade Stalin.[70]
> On a weekday, the exhibition had an average of 1,200 visitors and up to 5,000 on the weekend. A member from a group of workers of one of Kyiv's factories wrote in the guest book: "Here, when you are getting acquainted with the exhibits, you especially clearly understand how strong was the enemy. Once again you are convinced that the power of our weapons is not surpassed, for it won and is now finishing off the German beast in his den, for it destroyed the very myth of the invincibility of the German army."[71] The visitors were prompted to interpret the exhibition as a testament to Soviet power, which was even clearer against the display of the German deadly weapons.

The exhibition of trophy weapons at Pushkinsky Park was not the only one to commemorate war history in Kyiv. On May 14th, 1944, the TsK (Central Committee) of the Communist Party of Ukraine (also headed by Nikita Khrushchev) adopted a plan to organize a Republican Exhibition "Ukrainian Partisans in the Fight against the German-Fascist Invaders." The exhibition received a beautiful historical building in a prime location of central Kyiv, in the

[70] Mikhail Tardov, "Poverzhennaya sila," *Pravda Ukrainy*, (February 24, 1945), 3. Emphasis mine.
[71] L. Marchenko, "Na vystavke trofejnogo vooruzhenija."

governmental area of the city called Lypky. Shortly after the official order to organize the exhibition, the appointed staff started the process of collecting artifacts and documents related to partisan activities in various areas of Ukraine, sometimes even stepping foot in territories still occupied by the enemy.[72] Not only was the staff of the exhibition responsible for the collection of the materials, but local authorities in many areas of the Republic were also tasked to create special commissions to gather documentation and artifacts. As early as 1943, the Ukrainian Communist Party urged the partisans to send materials that documented their fight.[73]

Almost a hundred artists were involved in the design of the exhibition and its displays, creating paintings and sculptures. The exhibition opened on May 30, 1946 with nineteen rooms that displayed approximately 30,000 items telling the story of the partisan movement in Ukraine in a chronological order starting from pre-war Ukraine and its economic prosperity. Some of the rooms were interactive, where a visitor could listen to recordings of the war-time speeches of Stalin and Molotov or watch movies about the partisans.

As opposed to the trophy exhibition, which was run by the military and carried a strictly militaristic message, the "Ukrainian Partisans" exhibition displayed more historical and cultural content. The director, Luka E. Kyzia, was an historian and educator, as well as a member of the partisan movement during the war and a Party apparatchik. The historical content that went back to the times of Kyivan Rus' was prominently featured in the hall called "Treacherous attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union," which displayed art and documents "presenting the fight of

[72] Olena Rodionova, "Istorija stvorennja i funkcionuvannja vystavky 'Partyzany Ukrai'ny v borot'bi proty nimec'ko-fashysts'kyh zagarbnykiv'," in *Ukrai'ns'kyj narod u Drugij svitovij vijni. Do 70-richchja vyzvolennja Kyjeva vid nimec'kyh okupantiv: Zbirnyk naukovyh prac', prysvjachenyj 80-richchju z Dnja narodzhennja M.V.Kovalja* (Kyiv, 2013), 124.

[73] I. Kuzovkov and I. Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka "Partizani Ukrai'ni v borot'bi proti nimec'ko-fashists'kih zagarbnikiv." Dovidnik* (Kyiv, 1947), 1.

Kyivan Rus' against invasions of the nomads – the Pechenegs and the Cumans.[74] Then there were the battles of Alexander Nevsky with the Swedish and German dog-knights,[75] the fight of Daniel of Galicia against the Germans and the Hungarians, fights against the Tatar and Turkish invasions, the liberating uprising of the Ukrainian people led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky against the Polish pans, Battle of Poltava, the Patriotic war of 1812, and, finally, the expulsion of the Germans in 1918."[76] Here, the current War was placed at the end of the forever battle between the foreign forces of the evil and the Slavic army of the good. The exhibition directly followed the content plan in the directive sent out by *Narkompros* in the beginning of the war and emphasized the historical friendship between Ukraine and Russia.

One of the main messages of the exhibition was the organizing and leading role of the Communist Party and its leader Joseph Stalin in the partisan movement: "Great Stalin re-developed and took to the highest level the theoretical matters of partisan warfare that were brilliantly executed by our people in practice during the Patriotic War. Every day Ukrainian partisans felt the fatherly care of the great Stalin."[77] Despite its emphasis on the central role of the Party in the Partisan movement, the exhibition also honored many individual members of the underground resistance, displaying their photos, portraits, and documents.

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[74] The same historical reference was made by Vladimir Putin in his address to the Russian people in regards to the coronavirus crisis on April 8th, 2020. "Everything passes and this will pass. Our country has been through serious tests more than once: when tormented by the Pechenegs and the Cumans, Russia coped with everything. We will defeat this coronavirus infection. Together we will overcome everything." Alexander Marrow, "Invoking Medieval Invaders, Putin Rallies Russians against Coronavirus," *Reuters*, April 8, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-russia-putin/invoking-medieval-invaders-putin-rallies-russians-against-coronavirus-idUSKBN21Q1WQ Putin's reference caused an enormous wave of memes across Russian users' social media.

[75] From Marx's *Reitershunde* that correctly translates as "knightly rabble." The Battle on the Ice between the forces of the Novgorod prince Alexander Nevsky and Teutonic knights of the Livonian Order, that occurred on April 5, 1242 was widely celebrated by the USSR during the War and especially in April 1942 as a historical example of the great victory of the "Slavic people" against the Germans.

[76] I. Kuzovkov and I. Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka "Partizani Ukrai'ni,*" 12.

[77] Ibid.

The exhibition represented the atrocities of the Nazis in Ukraine committed against the civilian population, such as mass extermination and deportations to German labor camps, as around 2.2 million people were taken from Ukraine to Germany as *Ostarbeiters*, "eastern workers," who were essentially slave laborers.[78] The demonstration of German atrocities, crimes, and economic damage caused by the occupation was presented as a part of the exhibition's narrative that explained the development of the wide partisan movement as a united response of the Ukrainian people.

The exhibition also highlighted the fight of the partisans against the "Ukrainian-German nationalists at the service of Fascist Germany," referring to the organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) led by Stepan Bandera. The section displayed excerpts from the speech given by Dmytro Manuilsky, an old Bolshevik, professional ideologist, and the Foreign Minister of Ukraine (1944-1952) at a teachers' conference in Lviv in January 1945. Manuilsky introduced and popularized a somewhat absurd designation of the OUN as "Ukrainian-German nationalists at the service of Fascist Germany," arguing that "the nationalists talked of independence but in practice submitted to oppressive Nazi Germany, which did not allow for the free development of Ukrainian culture."[79] The speech was published as a pamphlet and became an influential policy manifesto that argued that the Red Army liberated "our Ukrainian population in the Western

[78] About the memory of the *Ostarbaiter* in Ukraine see Gelinada Grinchenko and Marta D. Olynyk. "The Ostarbeiter of Nazi Germany in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukrainian Historical Memory," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 54, no. 3/4 (2012): 401–26; Gelinada Grinchenko, "Ostarbeiters of the Third Reich in Ukrainian and European Public Discourses: Restitution, Recognition, Commemoration," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J. Fedor, et.al. (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2017).

[79] Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 50.

Ukraine from the yolk of Polish Pans and Romanian Boyars," and that the Soviet Union is the "only guarantor of freedom and independence of all republics that are part of it."[80]

The exhibition's guide narrated that the OUN was acting in collaboration with Nazi Germany committing crimes against the civilian population, partisans, and the Red Army: "the nationalists were helping Germans in every way to enslave Ukraine. They tried to break ties of brotherly friendship of the Ukrainian people with the *great* Russian people in order to weaken the Ukrainian nation and help the victory of Nazi Germany. But [the Ukrainian people] did not give in."[81] Notably, the ethnic cleansings perpetrated by the OUN-UPA, including the massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Galicia and participation in the Jewish Holocaust were not mentioned.[82] The guidebook instead asserted that the OUN "received weapons from the Germans" and then murdered "*peaceful citizens of Ukraine*, who were sympathetic to the Soviet partisans and refused to join nationalist units."[83] On the other hand, Manuilsky's Lviv speech, published only 2 years before the guidebook, claimed that the politics of German governing of Ukraine was to "incite the violence of Ukrainians against Poles, Poles against Ukrainians, both of them against the Russians, and everyone against the Jews."[84] These tendencies in the narration of the ethnic conflicts revealed several important points in the battle of the Soviet ideologists over collective memory in Ukraine: a desire to erase the memory of Volhynia and Galicia belonging to Poland before the Soviet

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[80] Dmytro Manuilsky, *Ukraïns'ko-Nìmec'kì Nacìonalìsti Na Službì u Fašists'koï Nìmeččini* (Kyiv, 1945), 4, 10. About Manuilsky and other Ukrainian ideologists struggling to construct the ideologically sound national history see Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, ch.3.

[81] I. Kuzovkov and I. Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka "Partizani Ukrai'ni,"* 58. Emphasis mine.

[82] About the ethnic cleansings in Western Ukraine, see Timothy Snyder, The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569- 1999 (New Haven, London, 2003), ch. 8. Snyder argues, that "how Poles and Ukrainians treated each other was transformed by their contact with the practices of occupiers, both of whom classified individuals and deported or killed according to classification." Ibid., 158.

[83] Ibid., 57. Emphasis mine.

[84] Manuilsky, *Ukraïns'ko-Nìmec'kì Nacìonalìsti*, 10.

annexation of 1939;[85] an intent to remove the discourse of the multiethnic Ukrainian society and, therefore, of the ethnic cleansings, preserving for a time being only a dichotomy between the "Ukrainian-German nationalists" fighting against the Soviet collective and failing due to the unbreakable brotherly friendship of Ukrainians and Russians.[86]

The curious recent discovery of the blue and yellow flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in storage at the National Museum of History of Ukraine sheds more light on the representation of Ukrainian Nationalists in the post-war period. According to the internal records of the museum, the flag was captured from "Ukrainian-German nationalists" by the Soviet partisans and subsequently displayed at the exhibition of trophy weapons.[87] The flag is unique because the vast majority of such banners were destroyed by the Soviet forces. Additionally, if it was indeed on display at the trophy exhibition, the flag's distinctive Ukrainian symbolism somewhat contradicted the prevalent discourse of the time which presented OUN as "Ukrainian-German nationalists at the service of Fascist Germany."[88]

The rhetoric of Russian glory and even superiority was predominant in the Soviet discourse in the immediate post-war decade as a culmination of the National Bolshevik ideology. As Serhy Yekelchuk argued about the Ukrainian historiography of the post-war decade, "the notion of

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[85] About Sovietization of eastern Poland, see Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*: *The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002)

[86] About the paradigm of East Slavic unity and brotherhood see Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, ch.2.

[87] The discovery was first reported by historian and Museum employee Oleksandr Ishchuk. "T͡Sikava znakhidka v fondakh Nat͡sional′noho muzei͡u istoriï Ukraïny. Prapor OUN seredyny 1940-kh rokiv͡iu," online publication, December 15, 2015, Liberation Movement Research Center, http://cdvr.org.ua/23283/2015/12/28/

[88] While Oleksandr Ishchuk claimed that the flag was on display at the exhibition of trophies which took place in Pushkinsky Park, the discovery of the flag caused some confusion among Ukrainian historians Serhii Rudenko and Bogdan Patriliak, who questioned the possibility of its display based on the absence of its mention in the guidebook of the "Ukrainian Partisans" exhibition. See Patriliak's article about the flag "Prapor Ukraïns′koï Povstans′koï Armiï v kolekt͡siï nat͡sional′noho muzei͡u istoriï Ukraïny," Visnyk Kyïvs′koho nat͡sional′noho universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka, 4(135) (2017): 42-47. Serhii Rudenko mentioned the flag in his article about the partisan exhibition, see "Vystavka 'Partyzany Ukraïny v borot′bi proty nimetsko-fashystskykh zaharbnykiv' u Kyi͡evi: osoblyvosti reprezentat͡siï ta interpretat͡siï voi͡ennoho mynuloho v 1946 – 1950 rr.," Viĭs′*kovo-istorychnyĭ meridian* 4(14) (2016): 16-27.

Russian superiority modified the 'friendship of peoples' paradigm into one of 'guidance relationships' between the dominant nation and its younger brothers."[89] To emphasize the brotherly ties of the Soviet peoples, the museum also featured a section called "Joint Fight of the Ukrainian Partisans with the Partisans of the Brotherly Slavic Peoples against the German-Fascist Occupiers."

Many of the exhibition's displays and artifacts were devoted to highlighting guerilla activities of the partisan divisions, such as diversions on railways and ambushes against the Germans from the rear. Most objects on display were photographs, art (drawings and sculptures), schemes and charts (for example, providing statistics on enemy echelons blown up by the partisans). But there were also actual artifacts from the war, such as mines and bombs, used by the partisans – both delivered from the "mainland" and hand-crafted in the underground - as well as a pyramid of trophy firearms captured from the Germans.[90] There were also personal belongings of the partisan leaders. For example, Sydir Kovkar donated his machine gun, favorite fur coat and hat, compass, map-case, and pen that "went on a legendary raid to the Carpathians together with the glorious partisan leader" to the exhibition.[91]

One of the last rooms of the exhibition, the Victory Hall, highlighted the contributors to the victory over the Nazis – Soviet army heroes and civilians who contributed in the rear, Stalin and his marshals, and the partisans. A large painted panel portrayed heroes of the war, both at the front and in the rear, and notably of both Ukrainian and Russian origins. Among them were three times Heroes of the Soviet Union aces Alexander Pokryshkin (Russian) and Ivan Kozhedub (Ukrainian), famed sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko (Ukrainian), Hero of Socialist Labor miner

[89] Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press., 2004), 89.
[90] Kuzovkov and Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka"Partizani Ukrai'ni,"* 87.
[91] *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, October 11, 1944, 2.

Alexey Stakhanov (Russian, although setting his records in the Donbas region of Ukraine), and academician Alexander Baikov (Russian). There were also art pieces depicting the feats of two other heroes who performed heroic suicidal actions in battle - Alexander Matrosov  an infantry soldier from Dnipropetrovsk (now Dnipro), who died near Pskov, and Moscow-born, ethnically Belarusian pilot Nikolai Gastello, who died in Belarus. In the prominent place of the hall there was a sculpture of the "genius leader" comrade Stalin, as well as portraits of the Marshals of the Soviet Union.

Figure 1.3 Reception of the partisan commanders by N.S. Khrushchev. Artist Goncharuk.[92]

Finally, the contribution of the Ukrainian partisans was demonstrated by the chart that listed the partisans who were awarded various military decorations of the Soviet Union, the photographs of the award ceremonies, and the painting "Reception of the Partisan Commanders

[92] I. Kuzovkov and I. Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka*, 91.

by Nikita S. Khrushchev."[93] The painting featured a portrait of Stalin on the wall symbolically watching over the meeting group (figure 1.2).

At the end of September 1946, the exhibition received the status "Republican Museum of the First Category." The Committee for Cultural and Educational Institutions under the Council of the Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, now responsible for the exhibition, ordered to procure new stamps and seals with the code МПУ (MPU, Museum of the Ukrainian Partisans) to mark all the exhibition's items, which indirectly points to the plans of making it a permanent museum.[94]

***Minsk***

The German occupation of Belarus began with the German invasion on June 22, 1941 and lasted until August 1944. Immediately after the invasion, leaders of the Belarusian Communist Party began efforts to evacuate themselves and governmental documents and valuables, along with the civilian population, especially mothers with children, schools and summer camps, and factories. The evacuation was hectic and many people were left behind. The Germans occupied Minsk by June 28th, merely six days after the beginning of the war. During the occupation of Belarus, the TsK (Central Committee) of the Belarusian Communist Party was based out of Moscow. On June 2, 1942, the TsK made a decision to organize the Belarusian Republican Commission for the Collection of Materials related to the War.[95] The commission was curated by Timofei Gorbunov, one of the leaders of the Belarusian Communist Party, who was among the organizers of the republic's partisan movement and was responsible for the ideology business in Belarus. It was modeled after and advised by the Central Commission on the History of the Great

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[93] Ibid., 90.

[94] Archival documents are cited in Olena Rodionova, "Istorija stvorennja i funkcionuvannja vystavky "Partyzany Ukrai'ny v borot'bi proty nimec'ko-fashysts'kyh zagarbnykiv*'," Ukrai'ns'kyj narod u Drugij svitovij vijni. Do 70-richchja vyzvolennja Kyjeva vid nimec'kyh okupantiv*, (Kyi'v, 2013), 130.

[95] I. Iu. Voronkova, *Sozdanie i Stanovlenie Belorusskogo Gosudarstvennogo Muzei͡a Istorii Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny* (Minsk, 2001), 8.

Patriotic War led by Isaac Minz. In November 1942 the Commission put together an exhibition "Belarus is Living, Belarus is Fighting, Belarus is and will be Soviet" in the Historical Museum in Moscow. The report in the newspaper *Sovieckaja Bielaruś*, then based out of Moscow, described four parts of the exhibition. The first was called "Sun of Stalin's Constitution was Shining over our Cities and Villages" and presented Belarus before the war. The second, "Under of the Boot of the German-Fascist Occupant" showed evidence of destruction and German atrocities, as well as documents and public orders of the German occupational administration. The third section of the exhibition called "Belarus is Alive, Belarus is Fighting" highlighted activities of the evacuated Belarusians: scientists, artists, and writers, as well as artifacts related to the partisan movement, such as partisans' uniforms, ammunition, and trophies captured by the partisans. The fourth and fifth sections were called "Red Army heroically fights at the fronts of the Great Patriotic War," and "Sons of the Belarusian people at the fronts of the Great Patriotic War."[96] The exhibition operated in Moscow until August 1944 when it was relocated to Minsk to become a part of the new war museum.

The September 30, 1943 directive of the TsK of the Communist Party of Belarus on the creation of the Museum on the History of the Fight of the Belarusian People with the German-Fascist Occupiers provided the ambitious plan for the collection of the materials that "characterize the fight of the Belarusian people."[97] The Partisan movement, which became a focal point of Soviet wartime propaganda in Belarus, was the most important topic of the war museum's content. With the exception of the "documents, photographs, and materials that demonstrate atrocities of the German occupants," the rest of the nine points of the plan contained various materials related to

[96] "Bielaruś žyvie, Bielaruś zmahajecca. Vystaŭka ŭ Dziaržaŭnym histaryčnym muziei," *Sovieckaja Bielaruś*, October 28, 1942, 4.
[97] NARB, f.1, op.3, d. 1249, l. 85. Cited in Voronkova, *Sozdanie i Stanovlenie*, 8.

the partisans, including samples of the weapons made by the partisans, portraits and sculptures of the prominent partisans, and the peculiar everyday day items of partisans' lives. The officials of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement and of the Communist Party of Belarus began sending requests for the materials related to partisan movement to the local commanders of the partisan units, thus putting the agency of their representation into the hands of the partisans themselves.

The Museum was assigned one of the few surviving buildings in the city center of Minsk on the Freedom Square. Now officially called the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War, it opened on October 22, 1944. The first director of the museum was writer and newspaper correspondent Vasily Stalnov, who worked at the Commission for the Collection of Materials of the War from its establishment. The first employees of the Museum were the participants in the partisan movement, a fact that was specifically emphasized in the press. *Pravda*'s correspondent wrote about the staff of the new museum:

> On July 16 a parade of armed partisans took place in Minsk, and a few days later the partisans came to this building and put aside their machine guns taking up the crafts of masons, plasterers, and painters. Then they also sent here the exhibits– there are the weapons that not so long ago were used to shoot the Hitlerites, there are newspapers and leaflets. […] All of them are Soviet intellectuals, art critics, writers, teachers, who only temporarily replaced their peaceful occupations with military ones. […][98]

The museum opened with two exhibitions - "Weapons of the Belarusian Partisans" and "Bolshevik Press of Belarus during the Great Patriotic War." The annotations at the original exhibits of the museum were made only in the Belarusian language, which caused complaints from some of the first visitors, who asked for the Russian language descriptions to be included.[99]

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[98] A. Zemtsov, "Dve vystavki, posv͡iashchennye narodnoĭ bor′be," *Pravda*, November 15, 1944, 3.

[99] Voronkova, *Sozdanie i Stanovlenie*, 24. Polish scholars Rafal Wnuk and Piotr Majewski noted that the modern museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk has captions "exclusively in Russian. Similarly, the museum shop does not offer the exhibition's catalogue or materials in any other." "Between Heroization and Martyrology: The Second World War in Selected Museums in Central and Eastern Europe," *The Polish Review* 60, no. 4 (2015), 7.

*Pravda*'s journalist emphasized the propagandistic value of the press describing the narrative of the exhibitions:

> This is essentially one exhibition dedicated to a single theme - weapons that the Belarusian people used with such heroic force to beat their tormentors, the executioners of Trostenets, the destroyers of cities and villages, the German-fascist invaders. The printed word was equal to a bullet and a grenade. And at the exhibition they are presented side by side.
> […]
> A poster with the words of [the national poet of Belarus] Yanka Kupala "The Belarusian people lives in its own power and glory" introduces us to the hall of underground newspapers. There are a lot of them. With drawings and photographs, multicolored, large and small formats, on paper of various colors, with patriotic appeals coming from the heart, with poems, stories, feuilletons - they played a major role in the fight against the invaders, in the fact that over 300 thousand Belarusians took up weapons of revenge. These newspapers were propagandists, agitators and organizers of the great cause of defending the Motherland. [100]

Similar to many other cities of the Union, Minsk also had an exhibition of the trophy weapons, although it was smaller in scale than the ones in Kyiv and Moscow, probably because it was organized hastily after the liberation of Minsk. The employees of the newly founded Belarusian Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the majority of whom were partisans, put together the Republican Exhibition of the Trophy Weapons that was opened November 7th, 1944 on a large territory adjacent to the House of the Red Army, which was intended to become a public park in the future; the territory was cleaned up, benches were installed, and bushes and trees were planted. The exhibition was decorated with Stalin's sculpture, art, and banners with slogans to fight the enemy and two obelisks that displayed the dates of liberation of Minsk and of the whole Belarus.[101] The highlight of the exhibition was the Soviet T-34 tank displayed in front of the enemy's weapons, symbolizing the superiority of the Red Army and honoring the tank division that first arrived in liberated Minsk. The concrete stand of the tank was engraved with the phrase "Whoever

[100] Zemtsov, "Dve vystavki, posv͡iashchennye narodnoĭ bor′be."
[101] "Rėspublikanska͡ia vystaŭka ŭzoraŭ trafeĭnaha ŭzbraenni͡a," *Zviazda*, November 11, 1944, 5.

comes to us with a sword, from a sword will perish," a paraphrase of a Biblical proverb attributed to Alexander Nevsky. The display featured German "Tigers," "Panthers," "Ferdinands," and other weapons, delivered to the city square straight from the battlefields near Babruysk and Minsk.

In the meantime, the Minsk museum continued to quickly expand its scope, presenting new exhibitions in 1945-47. In the fall 1944-spring 1945, the staff of the museum took four trips to the frontlines, in Poland and Germany, to collect exhibits in addition to the continuing collection work on the territory of Belarus. The new sections opened in 1945 were "The Occupational Regime and Atrocities of the German-Fascist Invaders in Belarus," the central section "Partisan movement in Belarus," and "Rebuilding Belarus"; in 1946 – "Economics and Culture in Soviet Belarus before the War," "Treacherous attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union and Heroic Defense of the Soviet People," "Liberation of the Soviet Land from the German Occupiers," and "The Soviet Army – Liberator of the Peoples of Europe from the Hitlerite Slavery"; 1947 – "The Soviet Rear during the Great Patriotic War." On May 1, 1947 the Museum presented its first permanent exposition based on the previously developed exhibitions and sections. The narrative in this exposition was generally very similar to the Kyivan Museum of the Partisan movement. However, there were also significant differences defined by the local initiative and political conditions. One of the most significant distinctions between the two museums was the representation of the mass destruction of the Jews.

***Representation of the Holocaust in the Museums of Kyiv and Minsk***

A few months after the opening of the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk, its staff presented a new section of the exposition called "Occupational Regime and Atrocities of the German-Fascist Invaders in Belarus." A correspondent of *Sovetskaya Belorussia* described some of the items of the new exhibition, which were obtained at the death camps in the villages of Malyi

Trostenetz and Masyukovshchina and other murder sites in Minsk and its vicinity as well as photographs of these sites:

> The personal belongings of the victims caked in blood, including glasses, watches, wallets with burnt money, photographic cards of the sufferers. Photographs of burnt children.
> […]
> […] wooden stretchers, on which the corpses of the tortured were dragged, a hook, which was used to throw people into terrible furnaces, tin, on which human ashes have been accumulating.
> […]
> An enlarged photo of three Soviet people hanged by the Germans - on the site near the Minsk House of the Red Army. Among the hanged were two men and one woman.[102]

The (unnamed) journalist argued that "Germans are age-old enemies of the Belarusian people" and that everyone who visits the exhibition would swear to revenge the "Fascist murderers" for the death camps.[103] However, the newspaper article about the new exhibition failed to mention that tens of thousands of Malyi Trostenetz victims were Jews, not only from Minsk and its vicinity but also deported from other European locales, following the widespread Soviet practice of silencing the Jewish Holocaust.[104]

The representation of the Holocaust in the Soviet museums of war was directly dependent on two politico-ideological factors. First was the way in which the Soviet authorities handled, reported, and represented all of the Nazi atrocities on occupied Soviet land. Second was the Soviet treatment of the Holocaust, as a particular atrocity, and its memorialization which also depended on the regional factors.

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[102] "Istoki vekovoĭ nenavisti," *Sovetskai͡a Belorussii͡a*, December 26, 1944, 2.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Yet, the article above that summarized the ChGK report about German atrocities in Ukrainian Lviv region, reported that Germans there murdered "700,000 of the Soviet people as well as citizens of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Holland, Great Britain, and USA, brought there from the concentration camps in Germany." The same article also reported about 136,000 victims of the Lviv Jewish ghetto. "O zlodeĭani͡akh nemt͡sev na territorii L′vovskoĭ oblasti,"*Sovetskai͡a Belorussii͡a*, December 26, 1944, 2.

The war crimes carried out by the Nazis and their allies included the deportation of civilians to labor camps, direct mass murders and enforced famines, including starvation of over three million prisoners of war and the attempt to starve the whole city of Leningrad. While the entire population suffered, some groups, including Jews, people who were disabled or mentally ill, prisoners of war, and members of the Communist Party were specifically targeted to be quickly murdered.[105]

The primary entity responsible for investigating Nazi war crimes and atrocities against the Soviet population was the *Chrezvychainaia gosudarstvennaia komissiia* (ChGK) - "Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR."[106] The commission was founded in November 1942 and published multiple reports on the atrocities for both international and domestic audiences. Primarily, the reports were intended for the Allies with the immediate goal of their mobilization while keeping in mind future tribunals and retribution. The actual fieldwork of interviewing witnesses and examining sites of atrocities was conducted by the local commissions that were composed of the NKVD officers, local party apparatchiks, and army political officials.

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[105] See Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010); Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941– 1945: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfar*e, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940– 1941* (New York, 2006); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds. *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008).

[106] About the commission see Marina Sorokina, "People and Procedures: Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR," *Kritika* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 797-831; Kiril Feferman, "Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR: Documenting the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5.4 (2003): 587-602.

Before the establishment of the commission, the official messages and reports about atrocities were given directly by the commissar of foreign affairs Viacheslav Molotov or Joseph Stalin.[107] On the domestic front, their notes and messages were published in *Pravda* and other newspapers. Perhaps an equal or even more important goal of these messages was their translation for foreign audiences in the Allied countries. The embassy of the USSR in Washington D.C. regularly published various war documents and speeches by the Soviet leaders. Other media messages about German atrocities also regularly appeared in the press, including photographs of the murder sites and victims' bodies. As Karel Berkhoff categorized, "the atrocity propaganda defined various victim groups: captured soldiers, civilians killed, victims of rape, and citizens deported to Germany."[108] Stories and photographs of the different categories of victims, including children, regularly appeared in the Soviet press and were meant to cause an extreme emotional response in its readers.[109] Soviet museums of war presented the atrocities with the same graphic approach as the press outlets as in the above example from *Sovetskaya Belorussia*. The domestic atrocity propaganda had various goals including mobilization of the population, causing hatred of the enemy, and, crucial in both Ukraine and Belarus, to prevent collaboration of the Soviet people with the enemy by demonstrating its crimes against the civilians.[110] At the same time, the Soviet authorities oftentimes had to walk a fine line between efforts to highlight Nazi atrocities and desires to hide its own incompetence and lack of preparedness.

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[107] Stalin himself mentioned murders of the Soviet Jews by the Germans only once referring to the "medieval Jewish pogroms" in his speech on November 6, 1941.

[108] Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 123.

[109] This is not to say that this approach was anything exclusive to the Soviets. E.g. see the issue of LIFE Magazine from February 23, 1942 features extremely graphic photos of corpses of the "Russian prisoners of war" and starved Polish children.

[110] Berkhoff argues that it was not the often ineffective propaganda that mobilized the population, but the actual reality that Soviet citizens learned – "Hitler's regime offered no livable alternative to Stalin's. That awareness, deriving not just from the propaganda but also from rumors, was the key reason people rallied around the state and its armed forces." *Motherland in Danger*, 277-278.

The destruction of Jews on the territory of the USSR was generally included in the broad category of Nazi atrocities against the Soviet people.[111] However, in the words of Zvi Gitelman, "western assertions to the contrary, there was no consistent Soviet "party line" on the Holocaust."[112] Different approaches to representation of the Holocaust that co-existed in the Soviet Union during the war and immediately after become evident from comparing how the events of the Holocaust were presented in the war museums in Kyiv and Minsk.

Kyiv's exhibition "Ukrainian Partisans" had a section called "What the Germans Brought to the Ukrainian People" that highlighted the atrocities of the Nazis in Ukraine committed against the civilian population, such as mass extermination and deportations to German labor camps. Among the documents on display was the copy of an infamous order of the Nazis posted in Kyiv in the beginning of occupation on September 29, 1941 that ordered all Kyivan Jews to assemble for a supposed resettlement. Photographs of the Babi Yar ravine and the exhumed bodies of the murdered people were also on display. The exhibition's guide estimated that over 70,000 "Kyivites of the Jewish nationality" were murdered at Babi Yar.[113]

The Soviet approach to publicizing the Babi Yar tragedy evolved throughout the war and after. Kirill Feferman demonstrated that while some Holocaust events, including the Babi Yar massacre, were explicitly reported in the Soviet press as murders of the Jews, in the first two years

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[111] Zvi Gitelman, who reminds that "no country in the West lost as many of its non-Jewish citizens in the war against Nazism than USSR," characterizes that the Holocaust in the USSR was seen very differently from any other country, including Poland and Yugoslavia: "as an integral part of a larger phenomenon - the murder of civilians [..]. It was said to be a natural consequence of racist fascism." Zvi Gitelman, "Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union," in *Bitter legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR,* ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18.

[112] Ibid., 14.

[113] Ibid, 27. Most Kyivan Jews (around 100,000) were able to escape Kyiv before the invasion of the German army, but some 60,000 Jews stayed in the city, many of them - mothers with young children, the elderly, and sick, - unable to flee. According to the German military reports, 33,771 Jews were massacred in two days, September 29-30, at Babi Yar. In the following months, German occupational authorities continued killing thousands more Jews at Babi Yar, as well as non-Jews including Gypsies (Roma), Communist party members, and Soviet prisoners of war. It is estimated that some 100,000 people were murdered at Babi Yar.

of the war the extermination of the Jews was seen more as a matter of foreign policy. Between 1943-45, the Holocaust became an even more important "Soviet bargaining chip" for post-war compensation and retributions for the sufferings of the Soviet people under Nazi occupation.[114] On the domestic front, however, by the end of the war, the Jewish toll was downplayed in the official reports published by the Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK) and the victims of the massacre in Babi Yar in September 1941 were referred to as "peaceful Soviet citizens."[115] The report was edited on the highest level by the main Soviet propagandist Georgy Aleksandrov to replace the word "Jews" with "peaceful Soviet citizens."[116] Nonetheless, as Berkhoff concluded, throughout the war "despite the media's tendency to bury the knowledge that the Jews were targeted for total mass murder, Soviet readers and radio listeners who *wanted* to know were able to find references to that Nazi campaign."[117] The situation shifted again in 1945-48 when the Soviets participated in the post-war negotiations and Nuremberg trials. The Holocaust then became a part of the discourse both in the international legal arena and was tolerated in domestic media, where it was generally discussed by Jewish authors and artists.[118] It was precisely during that time when the exhibition "Ukrainian Partisans" opened with the section that explicitly presented the Jewish tragedy of Babi Yar.[119]

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[114] Kirill Feferman, *Soviet Jewish Sstepchild*, 16-18, 20.

[115] *Soobshchenie Chrezvychaĭnoĭ gosudarstvennoĭ komissii po ustanovleni͡u i rassledovani͡u zlodei͡anit nemet͡sko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov i prichinennogo imi ushcherba grazhdanam, kolkhozam, obshchestvennym organizat͡sii͡am, gosudarstvennym predpri͡atii͡am i uchrezhdeni͡am SSSR o razrusheni͡akh i zverstvakh, sovershennykh nemet͡sko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v gorode Kyive* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1944), 10-15.

[116] Ilya Altman, *Zhertvy nenavisti: Kholokost v SSSR 1941-1945 gg.* (Moscow, 2002), 397-398.

[117] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 166.

[118] Feferman, *Soviet Jewish stepchild*, 26.

[119] An even more prominent example of a museum that explicitly told about the Holocaust in the Soviet Union was the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, founded in the autumn of 1944 upon the initiative of the Holocaust survivors/Jewish partisans. The museum, located in the buildings of the former Jewish ghetto, was closed in 1949 after the beginning of Stalin's wide anti-Semitic campaign. About the museum see E. David Fishman, *The Book Smugglers. Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis* (University Press of New England: ForeEdge, 2017), e-book, ch. 16,17, 28; in Lithuanian see Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, "Žydų Muziejus Vilniuje: Pirmieji Bandymai

The Minsk museum's section devoted to the German atrocities was larger, featuring many items from the death camp in the village Maly Trostenets, including tools of murder, photographs, and personal belongings of the victims, and even a diorama of the camp's entrance. The Trostenets concentration camp initially held Soviet prisoners of war, but by 1942 became a death camp for various categories of people, including thousands of Jews not only from Minsk and its vicinity, but also for the thousands of the Jewish people deported from Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia. The Soviets knew about the foreign victims of the camp at least as early as July 1944, but did not make it public until the 1960s.[120] In the exact same manner as the report of the ChGK on Kyiv, all of the victims of Maly Trostenets were categorized as "peaceful Soviet people."[121] The report calculated the number of victims murdered in the camp-adjacent ravine Blagovshchina up to 150,000 people and the total victims of the camp at 206,500.[122]

Unlike in Kyiv, the Jewish victims of the mass murders were mentioned neither in the Minsk museum nor in the media reports about it.[123] First, the share of non-Jewish victims of Nazism among the Belarusians was exceptionally high, and, unlike, for example, Babi Yar, which was a site of an overwhelmingly Jewish tragedy, Maly Trostenets is not considered to be so.

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Įprasminti Trauminę Patirtį Ir Skatinti Tvarią Atmintį"/"The Jewish Museum In Vilnius: The First Attempts To Give Meaning To Traumatic Experience And Promote Sustainable Memory," *Knygotyra,* (2018, 71): 130-160.

[120] See Z . I. Beluga and N. I Kaminskij et.al., eds., *Prestupleniâ Nemecko-Fašistskih Okkupantov v Belorussii 1941-1944 (Dokumenty i Materialy)* (Minsk, 1965).

[121] The Minsk Jewish Ghetto was briefly mentioned in the "Report about Atrocities of the German-Fascist Invaders in Minsk," of the Extraordinary State Commission. Maly Trostenets in the same report was described as a place of death of "the Soviet civilian people." SSSR, Chrezvychaĭnaia gos. komissiia po ustanovleniiu i rassledovaniiu zlodeianiĭ nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov, *Soobshchenie Chrezvychaĭnoĭ gosudarstvennoĭ komissii po ustanovlenii͡u i rassledovanii͡u zlodeĭaniĭ nemet͡sko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov i ikh soobshchnikov o zlodeĭanii͡akh nemet͡sko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v gorode Minsk* (Moscow, 1944).

[122] Ibid, 12. These numbers are disputed in modern historiography. See *Lager' smerti «Trostenets» v evropeĭskoĭ pamiati. Materialy Mezhdunarodnoĭ Konferentsii*. 21–24 marta 2013 g. g. Minsk (Minsk, 2013); Sergei Novikov, "Trostenets v kontekste sravnitel'nogo instochnikovedeniia i noveishei istrogiografii po istorii Kholokosta v Belarusi 1941-1944 gg.," in Ilya Altman and Arkadi Zeltser, eds., *Voina, Kholokost i Istoricheskaia Pamiat': Materialy XX Mezhdunarodnoi Ezhegodnoi Konferentsii Po Iudaike*, vol. IV (Moscow: Sefer, 2013), 82.

[123] Nor were they mentioned in the last Soviet guide of the Museum published in 1987.

Furthermore, apart from the general trend of downplaying the Holocaust at the time of the museum's opening, post-occupation Belarus was headed by Panteleimon Ponomarenko,[124] a controversial statesman and a leader of the partisan movement who denounced the Minsk Ghetto underground as a German operation.[125] Ponomarenko personally initiated creation of the museum and curated its development. The archival documents show that after the 1947 opening of the permanent exposition, that featured materials on the extermination of the Jews in the Minsk Ghetto, the museum workers were ordered to remove these materials by the ideological officials of the of the Communist Party of Belarus.[126]

Nonetheless, the locals who visited the museum would know who the victims were. As noted by Arkadi Zeltser, although the Germans would not announce the mass murders of Jews when they took place, "the fact that the shootings were carried out near population centers meant that the entire population of a given locale, nevertheless, would know about the occurrence […] within mere hours."[127] Additionally, while the local Jewish initiative to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust was not encouraged, it was sometimes tolerated. In 1947, the Jews of Minsk installed a monument called The Pit, devoted to 5,000 prisoners of the Minsk Ghetto murdered by the Nazis on March 2, 1942. The monument in the central area of Minsk has inscriptions in both Yiddish and Russian.[128]

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[124] Ponomarenko notified Stalin about the mass annihilation of Jewish villagers of Belarus in August 1941. Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti*, 386.

[125] See Barbara Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto, 1941-1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 228-257. Epstein demonstrates that anti-Semitism was not rare among both the partisans and civilian population of wartime Belarus, albeit much less widespread in comparison to neighboring Ukraine and Poland. Ibid., 54-60.

[126] Aliaksandr, Hužaloŭski. *Muzei Belarusi (1941-1991 Hh.)* (Minsk, 2004), E-book, 44.

[127] Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory*, 28.

[128] About the monument see Inna Gerasimova, "Novaia istoriia starogo pamiatnika," *Mishpokha,* 22 (2008): 90-97.

Perhaps one of the most gruesome exhibits on display at the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War was the glass urn with the ashes and bones of the Maly Trostenets victims kept in the museum since 1945 (figure 1.4).[129] Displays of human ashes and other remains became a grim yet not entirely rare feature in some memorials to the victims of Nazism. For example, a memorial to the victims of the Majdanek camp included a large Mound built in 1947 from mixed-up ashes of the murdered.[130] Yet, the decision to display the ashes in a museum was certainly unorthodox.

Figure 1.4 The urn in the first building of the Museum. The guard booth of the camp is on the background[131]

The representation of the Holocaust in the museums mirrored the general approach of the Soviet media which broadly covered German atrocities while not highlighting the annihilation policy against the Jews.[132] However, as demonstrated in the Kyiv exhibition example, there was no uniform party line on the Holocaust and separate instances of its official memorialization

[129] In 2016 the remains were buried in the crypt of the Minsk Church of All Saints.

[130] In 1969, the ashes of Majdanek's victims were placed in the Mausoleum which was commissioned by the State Museum at Majdanek.

[131] S. Shchutski, ed., *Belaruski dz͡iarz͡haŭny muzeĭ historyi V͡ialikaĭ Aĭchynnaĭ vaĭny* (Minsk, 1962).

[132] Karel C. Berkhoff argued that "there was little Soviet about this: both the nature of the reporting and the reasons for them were essentially the same as in the United Kingdom and the United States." *Motherland in Danger*, 271.

stemming from local initiatives were possible in the immediate post-war years.[133] One of the members of the organizing committee of the exhibition was Mykola Bazhan - a famous Philo-Semite, who frequently wrote about the Jewish people and their culture in his poetry.[134] Bazhan was among the first who visited Babi Yar after Kyiv's liberation from the Nazis and shortly after wrote a poem "Yar"*:*[135]

> And Kyiv, angry Kyiv, witnessed this:
> As flames rose toward the sky from Babyi Yar.
> There is no penance for this kind of fire.
> There is no vengeance for this kind of murder.
> Damn the ones who say it's in the past.
> Damn the ones who say, "Forgive, it's over."[136]

Perhaps it was Mykola Bazhan who insisted on the representation of the Jewish tragedy of Babi Yar at the exhibition.

***Museums of War after the War***

***Moscow***

On August 5, 1948, the Minister for the Armed Forces Nikolai Bulganin and Head of the Moscow city council Georgi Popov submitted a report to Joseph Stalin with a suggestion to close down the exhibition at Gorky Park. The exhibition, they wrote, had about seven million visitors and "conducted significant work in the propaganda of combat force and historical victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR. The exhibition […] performed its role and its future existence is not

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[133] Similar tendencies are observed in the process of Jewish community memorialization of the Holocaust including the erection of monuments. Arkadi Zeltser argued: "The decisive factors were the personal attitude toward Jews and Jewish memorialization on the part of the officials at various levels, including republic-level leaders, and their sensitivity to policy changes." Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory*, 112.

[134] Mykola Platonovich Bazhan (1904-1983) - Ukrainian poet, war correspondent, member of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Minister (Commissars) of the Ukrainian SSR in 1943-46. Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR from 1951. Bazhan maintained a good relationship with Khruschev and entered Kyiv on November 6, 1943 as a part of a group of Ukrainian intelligentsia which accompanied the latter to liberated Kyiv.

[135] Mykola Bazhan, *V dni viĭny* (Kyiv, 1945), 63-65.

[136] Mykola Bazhan,"Yar" excerpt, trans. Amelia Glaser. "Babyn Yar Special Report," *The Odessa Review* no. 5 (October-November 2016): 30-46.

necessary. Moreover, the exhibition occupies one third of the best territory of [Gorky] Park and, therefore, creates difficulties in the organization of cultural servicing of Moscow's working people."[137] Instead, considering the "necessity of educating the population on the heroic traditions of the Great Patriotic War and its memorialization," Bulganin and Popov suggested to create a large State Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow, that would include documents, relics, and items from various civilian and military museums and other institutions.[138]

Bulganin and Popov's suggestion to close the exhibition was accepted and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union ordered the creation of a commission for the closure of the exhibition. Part of the exhibited weaponry was transferred to various military museums in Moscow and Leningrad, while the rest of them, including 22 airplanes and 57 tanks, were recycled as scrap metal.[139] The idea to create a large museum of the War in Moscow was shelved for many years. The Museum of the Great Patriotic War (called Victory Museum since 2017) opened in Moscow only on May 9, 1995.

***Kyiv***

In February 1950, the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR ordered an audit of all republican museums along with an ideological revision of all expositions.[140] The responsible bureaucrats were ordered to ensure that the "historical museums most fully displayed the heroic history of the Ukrainian people in connection with the history of the great Russian people and other fraternal peoples of the USSR, the worldwide historical meaning of the Great October Revolution, and leading role of the Party […]." The museums were to organize exhibitions on the

[137] Bulganin, Popov, cited in Maksim Kolomiets,"Trofei velikoi pobedy," *Frontovaia illiustratsiia*, no. 2 (2009), 12.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Kolomiets,"Trofei velikoi pobedy," 19.9/2/2022 8:36:00 PM
[140] Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 114-120.

history of Soviet society that presented "victories of the Soviet people, especially of the Red Army, in the period of the Great Patriotic War" as well as the ones that demonstrated the superiority of the Soviet regime and socialist culture over the "corrupt bourgeois culture."[141] Seemingly, the "Ukrainian Partisans" exhibition fit the bill. In September, however, the exhibition was ordered to close to the public for "reorganization of the exposition." Shortly afterward, its funds were transferred to the newly opened Kyiv State Historical Museum. By February 1951, the exhibition was officially liquidated. Some of the staff members went on to work in the Historical Museum as support for the department of the Great Patriotic War, whereas others were employed by the various institutions in the system of political education and propaganda.[142] The exhibition's director, former partisan Luka Kyzia was appointed head of the Ukrainian Society of the Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and subsequently procured a great political career.

By 1950, not only the general ideological and propaganda needs shifted from the Great Patriotic War to the Cold War, but also some of the topics that the exhibition covered, such as the Holocaust and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, were generally avoided.[143] Additionally, the "Ukrainian Partisans" occupied a beautiful historical mansion in Lypki, a prime location in Kyiv. In post-war Kyiv, such real estate was too valuable, which perhaps served as another reason for the absorption of the exhibition into the funds of the State Historical Museum. Lazar Kaganovich, appointed by Stalin to replace Khrushchev as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine in 1947, also had no personal interest in keeping the exhibition.

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[141] I. Bychkova, ed., *Kul'turne Budivnitstvo v Ukraïns'kiĭ RSR v 1941 - 1950* (Kyiv, 1989), 445-446.

[142] Olena Rodionova, "Istorija stvorennja i funkcionuvannja vystavky "Partyzany Ukrai'ny v borot'bi proty nimec'ko-fashysts'kyh zagarbnykiv"," *Ukrai'ns'kyj narod u Drugij svitovij vijni. Do 70-richchja vyzvolennja Kyjeva vid nimec'kyh okupantiv*, (Kyi'v, 2013), 131-132.

[143] E.g. on the avoidance of mentioning the Jewishness of the Babi Yar victims between 1949-56 see Kirill Feferman, *Soviet Jewish stepchild*, 43-45. About the extreme cautiousness to avoid "nationalism" in the publication of the survey on the history of Ukraine see Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 90-93.

After the closure of the exhibition, the Kyiv State Historical Museum, which was devoted to the "heroic history of the great Ukrainian people in connection with the history of all Soviet peoples from ancient ages to our days," became the main Ukrainian institution to present the history of the Great Patriotic War.[144] In 1955, the Museum had thirty rooms and four of them were devoted to the War. The guidebook did not mention either the mass destruction of the Jews nor the Ukrainian nationalists. By 1950, both of these topics had largely disappeared from official public discourse.

The trophy exhibition followed the same fate. Despite the initial plans to turn it into a permanent museum devoted to the Patriotic War, this idea was eventually shelved.[145] The exhibition existed until fall 1951 when it was closed.[146] Tanks, planes, and other weapons were recycled as scrap metal following the fate of the trophies exhibited in Moscow, Leningrad, and many other cities of the Union, while documents, art, and other smaller artifacts were transferred for storage to the Kyiv State Historical Museum.

A permanent museum of the Great Patriotic War in Kyiv was opened only in 1974. In 2015, after the 2014 Revolution of Dignity and the Russian annexation of the Crimea and outbreak of the Donbas conflict, it was renamed the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, as the Museum's focus and concept shifted to content specific to the Ukrainian people, stories, and experiences.[147] The smaller Museum of the Partisan Glory was established in 2008 as

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[144] M.M. Lysenko, ed., *Kyïvs'kyĭ Derzhavnyĭ Istorychnyĭ Muzeĭ. Putivnyk* (Kyiv, 1955), 4-5.

[145] Malakov, "Kyi'vs'ki trofejni vystavky," 157.

[146] Ibid.

[147] About the contemporary museum before its restructuring in 2015 see Rafa Wnuk, and Piotr M. Majewski, "Between Heroization and Martyrology," 10-12. About the historical memory in Ukraine post 2014, see Oxana Shevel,"The Battle for Historical Memory in Postrevolutionary Ukraine," *Current History* 115, no. 783 (2016): 258–63; Tetiana Pastushenko, "The War of Memory in Times of War: May 9 Celebrations in Kyiv in 2014–15," in *The Burden of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity in Contemporary Ukraine*, eds. Anna Wylegała, and Malgorzata Głowacka-Grajper, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 77–90.

a branch of the Kyiv History Museum. In 2015 the Museum of the Partisan Glory was renamed and reinvented as the Kyiv Occupation Museum, exploring what the museum calls the "multiple foreign occupations that Kyiv has endured in the twentieth century, including Soviet and Nazi."[148]

***Minsk***

The Belarusian Republican Exhibition of the Trophy Weapons was demoted in 1948, and the vast majority of weapons were recycled. However, the Soviet T-34 tank displayed at the exhibition was left at the square and in 1952 was turned into a monument to the tank crewmembers who liberated Minsk. The monument still stands in front of the Minsk House of the Officers.

The State Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk never closed since its opening in October 1944 and only moved locations.[149] By 1955, the Minsk Museum of the Great Patriotic War was the only museum of its kind in the Soviet Union, at least among the major cities.[150] The small museum brochure, published in 1962, in the spirit of the Cold War featured the photocopy of the Operation Barbarossa plan next to the copy of the New York Times' page that cited then-Senator Henry Truman, who, on June 24, 1941 said: "If we see that Germany is winning the war, we ought to help Russia; and if that Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and in that way

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[148] "Kyiv Occupation Museum," Museum of Kyiv History, accessed on July 14th, 2022, http://www.kyivhistorymuseum.org/en/museum-affiliates/museum-occupatson-kjiv

[149] About the modern museum see Rafa Wnuk, and Piotr M. Majewski, who argue that "the current exhibition is a mixture of the pre-1991 exhibition and the changes it underwent after the collapse of the Soviet Union." "Between Heroization and Martyrology," 5.

[150] Another exception was the Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn – Stalingrad which opened in 1937 as a Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn (name of Stalingrad-Volgograd until 1925) as a dedication to Stalin, who has led Tsaritsyn's Red Army's defense during the Russian Civil War. In 1943 the museum was reorganized to include the defense of Stalingrad during the Great Patriotic War. About that museum see Andreĭ Ivanovich Khmel′kov, *Gosudarstvennyĭ muzeĭ oborony T͡saritsyna-Stalingrada im. I. V. Stalina* (Stalingrad, 1949). In 1962, during the de-Stalinization campaign and following the renaming of the city itself form Stalingrad to Volgograd, the museum was renamed to Volgograd Museum of the Defense, see the guidebook Iu.A. Bondareva, *Volgogradskiĭ gosudarstvennyĭ muzeĭ oborony. Putevoditel'* (Moscow, 1963). In 1982 it was moved and reconstructed as the Museum-Panorama The Battle of Stalingrad.

let them kill as many as possible." [151] The brochure concluded: "What could be more inhuman than these documents, that demonstrate the nature of fascism and imperialism!"

The museum in Minsk did not close in the immediate post-war years despite the Union-wide trend due to the stability of the local Belarusian leadership and its strong investment in the museum that became an emblem for the myth of Belarus as a "partisan republic."[152] The original patron of the Museum was Panteleimon Ponomarenko, the First Secretary of the Belarusian Communist Party and Chief of Staff of the Soviet Partisan Movement during the war. He was personally invested in the museum and its narrative that glorified the partisans, and, therefore, Ponomarenko himself. For him and his associates, the creation of the favorable historical narrative was crucial to cover up their frantic flight from the advancing Germans in 1941 as well as other war-time misdeeds. Second, Ponomarenko, one of the most loyal Stalinists, controlled the creation of the museum from the very beginning, and the exposition was ideologically sound, albeit in the first years it frequently changed to the instability of the then-forming narratives of the war. Although Ponomarenko left his positions in Belarus in 1947, he was transferred to work for the central government and never fell out of Stalin's favor; the Belarusian Party was not subjected to the wrath of Stalin's political campaigns of the post-war years. The emphasis on the partisan identity of the republic grew even more prominent after Pyotr Masherov, a veteran of the partisan movement, became the first secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus in 1965, and "used the imagery of war to consolidate and legitimize his power."[153] Under Masherov, the museum received

[151] Shchutski, *Belaruski dz͡iarz͡haŭny muzeĭ historyi V͡ialikaĭ Aĭchynnaĭ vaĭny* (Minsk, 1962).

[152] Simon Lewis argues that "the Soviet myth of the "Partisan Republic," as Belarus came to be known, displaced trauma, attempting to delimit the contours of memory but only deferring the painful process of coming to terms with the past." "The "Partisan Republic": Colonial Myths and Memory Wars in Belarus," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J. Fedor, et.al. (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2017), 373.

[153] P.A. Rudling, "The Invisible Genocide: The Holocaust in Belarus," 64. Scholars of post-war Soviet history have argued for the rising political importance of the veterans who after the war took leading positions in the party and Soviet organizations. I.e. Amir Weiner argues that the networks of veterans of the Red Army or the partisan

a new building. The strong interest from the republican leadership in the museum ensured its long-lasting legacy and historical continuity. [154]

***Contemporary Context***

During the current war of Russian aggression against Ukraine, both Ukraine and Russia use military and war-themed exhibitions as a means of propaganda. On March 24, 2022, the Victory Museum in Moscow presented an exhibition called "Heroes of the Donbass," sponsored by the political party United Russia. The modest exhibition displayed photos and short biographies of the Russian soldiers and officers that took part in the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. On June 21, 2022, Moscow's Museum of the Military Uniform presented an exhibition "The Chronicles of the Donbass: Heroes and Fates" which featured military art, "Ukrainian school books, teaching children to hate Russia," items of the "satanic cult" allegedly belonging to the members of the Azov battalion, and, opposed to them, personal religious items of the Russian soldiers that feature traditional Saints-patrons of the Russian armed forces. Contemporary Russian servicemen were compared to the "Soviet intelligence general P.A. Sudoplatov (1907-1996) who fought against German Nazism and Ukrainian collaborationism before, during and after the Great Patriotic War."[155] Therefore, the organizers of the exhibition equated the modern armed forces of

movement, had used their shared experiences and personal war-based connections for gaining political legitimacy. *Making Sense of War*, 8.

[154] In 2012, David R. Marples noted that "Belarus is perhaps the only country today in which the entire society was involved in the war and subjected to lengthy occupation, and lacking for the most part any alternative version of the events." Marples attributes this to the role of Ponomarenko and other former partisans that dominated the leading positions in the Republic until 1980. "Introduction: Historical Memory and the Great Patriotic War," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 54, no. 3/4 (2012), 292-293. P.A. Rulding presents a more nuanced approach arguing that modern (the article was published in 2017) Belarusian regime, based on the Soviet past and unity with Russia, appropriates some "other parts of Belarusian history, turning it into political capital by adopting some of the references of the nationalist opposition." "'Unhappy Is the Person Who Has No Motherland': National Ideology and History Writing in Lukashenka's Belarus," in: *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J. Fedor, et.al. (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2017), 95-96. Belarusian nationalism and identity-building as distinctly separate from Russia continues to grow after the 2020 presidential elections and the rise of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya as a leader of the Belarusian democratic movement.

[155] "Donbasskie khroniki. Geroi i sud′by," Moscow Museum of Military Uniform, accessed July 14, 2022, https://museum-vf.ru/exhibition/donbasskie-khroniki-geroi-i-sudby/

independent Ukraine with the Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), active in the 1920s-1950s. At the same time, Sudoplatov, most famous for the 1938 assassination of Yevhen Konovalets (leader of the OUN), and organization of the 1940 assassination of Leon Trotsky, was used as a model hero for the Russian army.

On May 8, 2022, the anniversary of the Day of Memory and Reconciliation (Victory in Europe Day in Ukraine), the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War opened an exhibition called "Ukraine – Crucifixion" that features a damaged icon from a town in the Kyiv region, a model of a basement shelter with authentic items, Russian weapons, and other artifacts from the current war.[156] Additionally, the National Guard of Ukraine organized an exhibition of destroyed Russian military equipment on Mykhailivs'ka Square in the Kyiv city center, opened on May 28, 2022. The exhibition was meant to boost the morale of the Ukrainian people and humiliate the enemy by demonstrating the incompetence of the Russian army and its weaponry.

Ukraine also sent Russian trophy weapons to display in the Czech Republic. Burned out, defeated Russian tanks and other weapons were displayed in Prague on July 11, 2022. The Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs Denys Monastyrs'kyĭ presented the exhibition. Referring to the August 1968 Soviet invasion that crushed the Prague Spring, Monastyrs'kyĭ proclaimed: "Russian tanks are back in Prague, but this time broken, burned out by the hands of the Ukrainian warriors."[157] The juxtaposition of the current Russian full-scale invasion of independent Ukraine in 2022 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, however, leads to unfavorable

[156] "'Ukraïna – rozp'i͡attia'. Vidkryttia pershoï v kraïni ta sviti muzeĭnoï vystavky pro rosiĭs′ko-ukraïns′ku viĭnu," National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, accessed July 14, 2022, https://www.warmuseum.kiev.ua/_all-news-images/?id=32&news_year=2022

[157] "Denys Monastyrs′kyĭ: rosiĭs′ki tanky znovu v Prazi, ale rozbyti, spaleni ukraïns′kymy voïnamy," the Ukrainian Ministry of the Internal Affairs, accessed July 14, 2022, https://mvs.gov.ua/uk/news/denis-monastirskii-rosiiski-tanki-znovu-v-prazi-ale-rozbiti-spaleni-ukrayinskimi-voyinami

conclusions for Monastyrs'kyĭ's rhetoric that effectively excludes Ukraine and Ukrainians from active involvement in Soviet politics and identifies all Soviets as "Russian." One of the main planners of the invasion, however, was Marshal Andrei Grechko, a Ukrainian; a military commander of the Warsaw pact combined armed forces that invaded Czechoslovakia was another Ukrainian, General Ivan Pavlovsky; General Pyotr Koshevoy, the commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany that also took an active part in organizing the invasion, was a Ukrainian as well. The Soviet T-54/5 tanks, used for the invasion, were designed in Kharkiv.

The history of the Soviet Union is complex; using it for various political purposes has become a feature of the independent states of the former Soviet Union. Modern Russia, which inherited not only the Soviet nuclear arsenal, foreign debt, and the permanent seat on the UN Security Council, but also appropriated the World War II victor status and other Soviet achievements as its own, is the worst offender in subjugating, rewriting, and exploiting history for its political and ideological goals. Instrumentalization of history led Russian President and war criminal Vladimir Putin and his ideologists to the absurd accusations of modern Ukraine in Nazism that legitimized the 2022 invasion in the eyes of many Russians.

With the continuing aggression of Russia against Ukraine, the latter, as a victim of the unprecedented contemporary European war, will continue to establish a new identity for its statehood, separate from the Soviet Union. In the long term, these tendencies already well-established in the Baltic States, will likely manifest in the other post-Soviet states, including Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Belarus.

***Conclusion***

Throughout the 1930s, history, arts, and culture became increasingly subordinated to the totalitarian Soviet state and its ideology and propaganda. Museums became one of the important

tools of the Stalinist propaganda machine long before the Second World War. With the beginning of the German invasion, propaganda officials called on the Soviet museums to join the effort of total war and mobilization and direct their efforts on patriotic propaganda and agitation. Notwithstanding the top-down directives, the war years also saw a strong tendency of local initiatives among both the staff of the existing museums and various activists, albeit always approved and curated by the local authorities, to create new exhibitions and museums devoted to the then-current war.

This chapter traced the development of the war exhibitions' content and narratives. In accordance with the general propaganda line of National Bolshevism that culminated during the war, the museums organized exhibitions that demonstrated the connection of the Soviet people with the great traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian military successes, and, especially in the wars against the Germans. As the war progressed, and military luck shifted to favor the Soviets, the trophy weapons became a primary source of content for the exhibitions, with the largest one opening at Gorky Park in Moscow. The journalists, reviewing the exhibitions of the trophy weapons in the press, spearheaded by the rhetoric of the influential writer and wartime propagandist Ilya Ehrenburg, prolifically used anthropomorphic and zoomorphic metaphors when describing the large weapons (e.g. tanks, planes) in the press, treating them as a proxy for the invading troops. Other typical topics covered in the war exhibitions and museums across the Union included peaceful life and pre-war economic development, the atrocities of the occupiers, partisan warfare, liberation, victory over Germany and post-war rebuilding. These topics were largely based on the content plans written by the Moscow ideologists. However, there were also significant regional differences among various museums as demonstrated on examples of Minsk and Kyiv. The latter displayed evidence of deliberate extermination of the Jews in Babi Yar by the Nazis and

extensively covered the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which may have contributed to the museum's subsequent closure. With crystallization of the late Stalinist regime's policies that incorporated state-sponsored anti-Semitism as well as stronger unification of the state-wide ideology, the Jewish Holocaust continued to be silenced on the central level, along with the Ukrainian militant nationalist movement, suppressed by the end of the 1950s.

By 1947, Stalin and the Stalinist state, which emerged from the war in a complete l'état-c'est-moi arrangement, were no longer interested in perpetuating the war discourse, instead focusing on the rebuilding of the country. May 9th, Victory Day, was demoted to a workday from an official state holiday, decorated war veterans stopped receiving any associated rewards and benefits and military commanders were discouraged from writing memoirs.[158] The Great Patriotic War propaganda ceded to the Cold War and the mortal enemy was now not a German Fascist but an American Imperialist. In this ideological climate, large war memorialization projects that required significant money and resources were, as a Soviet bureaucrat would say, inexpedient, leading to the closures of many war-time museums.

Nonetheless, nowhere in the Soviet Union were the museums closed as brutally as in Leningrad. The client-patron relationships that played a positive role for the museum in Minsk led to the tragedy of the Leningrad's Museum of the Defense: the local party and city leaders were involved in the establishment of the museum, and their downfall in the Leningrad Affair led to the destruction of the museum in 1949. The next two chapters will explore the establishment of the Leningrad Museum and its tragic end.

[158] Tumarkin, *The Living And the Dead*, 103-105.

## Chapter II. At a Crossroads of Memory and Propaganda: Exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" (1944-45)

Not bitter to me are need and thrall—
Neither are hunger or destruction,
But a chill pierces my spirit,
In a moldy trickle swirls decay.
"Bread," "water," "firewood": those words
We've understood and seem to know,
But with every passing hour forget
Other, better words.

Mikhail Kuzmin, 1921

### *Introduction*

On the evening of April 30, 1944 Pavel Luknitsky — writer, poet, and TASS front correspondent during the war — came to the Salt Town (*Solianoi Gorodok*), a historical complex of buildings in the very center of Saint Petersburg - Leningrad, named after the salt storage facilities that were housed there between 1780 and 1860. Together with hundreds of other visitors who came that night by invitation only, Luknitsky walked through the melting snow to the entrance of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," which had a grand opening that night.[1] Other, more important visitors, such as city party leaders and generals with their wives, arrived to the exhibition in their cars. Photographers were rushing around, the military orchestra was playing solemn and festive music, including the new Anthem of the Soviet Union,[2] and all the buildings of the Salt Town were festively decorated with red flags. The alleys of the Salt Town, still covered with debris from the bombing and shelling, were crammed with German tanks and other large

[1] Pavel Luknitsky is one of the "principal personages" in Harrison Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege Of Leningrad*, (New York, 1969).

[2] Until 1944 Soviet Union used "The Internationale" as its anthem. The new anthem, composed by Alexander Alexandrov with the lyrics by Sergey Mikhalkov and Gabriel El-Registan was created in 1943 and introduced to the Soviet people on the All-Union radio in April 1944 only two weeks before the opening of the exhibition. The updated version of the Stalinist anthem is used as the State Anthem of the Russian Federation since 2000 upon initiative of Vladimir Putin.

weapons that were displayed as trophies. Chairman of the *Lengorispolkom* Pyotr Popkov cut the red ribbon and officially opened the exhibition on behalf of the Military Council of Leningrad Front, *Lengorkom* and *Lengorispolkom*.[3]

Figure 2.1 Crowds on the opening night of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad"

At the opening of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," Popkov gave a speech that recapped the narrative of the exhibition and its goals from the perspective of the city's leadership. In April 1944, Popkov, who was one of the main people in the city's leadership and liked calling himself the mayor of Leningrad to foreign journalists, was feeling victorious. Only five short years later, Popkov will be arrested in the office of Malenkov, interrogated and tortured, and then executed. Popkov said:

[3] Pyotr S. Popkov (1903-1950) - first secretary of the party organization in Leningrad from 1946-1949, chairman of the *Lengorispolkom* in 1939-1946, member of the Military Council of the Leningrad Front. Popkov was one of the main figures in the Leningrad Affair. He was arrested in August 1949 and executed on October 1, 1950.

> The exhibition reflected all the stages of the heroic battle of Leningraders for their city. It represents the bloody battles on the approaches to Leningrad; and the hardships suffered by the Leningraders during the years of the blockade; the battle for the ice road and the revival of Leningrad industry; the accumulation of forces for decisive battles with the enemy and the final stage of the defeat of the Nazi hordes under the walls of our city. The exhibition will make its visitors relive their experiences. It will give them a sense of pride in their Red Army, in their Navy, and a sense of hatred for the enemy who has caused so much grief and destruction to the city of Lenin. Tours with visitors from other cities and from the allied countries will come to this exhibition, and it will help them understand the grandeur of that gigantic battle that we fought for 28 months and which we won.[4]

Figure 2.2 Pyotr Popkov is speaking at the rally devoted to the opening of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad." Courtesy of the National Library of Russia.

Luknitsky spent four hours at the exhibition, where much was known and familiar to him. However, he also learned a lot: "This new thing for me was mainly different summarizing numbers or details of the blockade era we lived through that were tied to the names of particular people."[5] In his diary that night Luknitsky wrote about his ambivalent feelings about the exhibition. On one hand, the exhibition made an enormous impression on him; on the other, he wrote: "a person not familiar with besieged Leningrad, cannot judge about our time only by this exhibition, or imagine even a thousandth part of what we have experienced and lived through." Most importantly, the exhibition covered hunger "poorly and shy:"

[4] *Leningradskaia Pravda*, "Otkrytie vystavki 'geroicheskai͡a oborona Leningrada,'" May 1, 1944, No 105 (8829), 3.
[5] Pavel Luknit͡skiĭ, *Leningrad deĭstvuet. Frontovoĭ dnevnik,* (Moscow, 1971), 372.

> Of course, Leningraders know much more than the exhibition tells - for example, about hunger, the hardships and horrors of the blockade. There is only one convincing display with examples of substitutes used in food service, and some related figures. There are only two or three photographs depicting dystrophics.[6] But, perhaps, the director of the exhibition, Lev Lvovich Rakov, himself a *blokadni*k, a participant in the battles on the Neva, was right? Maybe it is better to keep for the future things that are too tormenting for the hearts of all who lost their loved ones in the first winter?[7]

The large-scale exhibition that opened that night with pomp and circumstance kept expanding, and in October 1945 was reorganized into a permanent Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. However, the part of the museum that Luknitsky envisioned to show "the hunger, the hardships and horrors of the blockade" in its full historical truth was never created, although the museum workers significantly expanded the section of hunger since the exhibition's opening. The museum was destroyed in 1949 during the events of the Leningrad Affair, when the exposition was deemed to be "anti-Communistic" and not strong enough in its emphasis of the role of the Party and Stalin.

This chapter explores the history and content of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" in 1944-45 before its transformation into a permanent museum, investigating the reciprocal and complex relationship between the-then emerging myth of the Heroic Leningrad and the memory of the survivors of the siege. It also demonstrates that the exhibition was intended to be a permanent center of the study of the blockade and defense of Leningrad, which its witnesses considered a unique historical event from its very onset.

Structurally, the chapter first investigates the precursors to the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" before analyzing the content of the exhibition using the guidebook published in 1945,

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[6] "Alimentary distrophy" is the official term developed by the medical community in besieged Leningrad to describe the pathological effects of starvation. See Nadezhda Cherepenina, "The Scale of Famine in the Besieged City," in *Life and death in besieged Leningrad, 1941-44*, ed. Barber, John, and A. R. Dzeniskevich (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 39-41.

[7] Ibid, 373.

surviving photographs of the halls, and testimonies of the exhibition's workers and visitors. In order to contextualize the narrative of the exhibition and to paint a clearer picture on how the narrative was perceived by its visitors, I use both primary and secondary historical sources, including memoirs and diaries written by the survivors of the siege. The analysis of the exhibition's narrative is organized according to its key themes and in a loosely chronological order: Leningrad before the siege and its preparation for the defense; the partisans; life and death inside the circle; the role of women in Leningrad; breaking of the Blockade in January 1943 and the subsequent developments; and victory at Leningrad.

As relayed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, war exhibitions were an integral part of Soviet wartime propaganda. The exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," like its counterparts in Kyiv and Minsk, had been a part of the war propaganda objective and was under the ideological control of various officials, both local and from the center. The exhibition's heavy ideological footing, essential for any Soviet cultural institution, could make for a boring experience, but the people who created it were talented artists, historians, and museum curators, who lived through the horrors of the war and the siege. The exhibition was unique from a design standpoint. Unlike the trophy exhibitions that took place in other cities, where all the large weaponry was displayed only outside, "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" presented a significant amount of heavy equipment (tanks, cannons, and even planes), both German and Soviet, in the same indoor space of the Salt Town, on the background of the large realistic dioramas and artworks. The weapons were also placed outside of the buildings of the Salt Town. The exhibition's focus on military events stemmed from the tendency to avoid human suffering in favor of "military feats," as well as from a generally militaristic culture natural during a war. Nonetheless, the work and sacrifices made by

the Leningraders were narrated in a way which made the exhibition popular among the *blokadniki*, who also contributed many personal items.

Comparing narratives about trauma in connection with the Holocaust and the siege of Leningrad, historian Alexandra Wachter argues that they are fundamentally different, since for the most part "[the] story that is told in Soviet and post-Soviet literature, historiography and collections of survivors' memoirs is not one of disintegration and trauma; it is a coherent story of a critical moment in history that was heroically mastered and eventually turned into a happy ending."[8] Lisa Kirschenbaum demonstrated that Leningraders themselves internalized their trauma of starvation and survival in the besieged city as an experience of "heroic defense." Kirschenbaum documented the efforts of the local state-sponsored media to "infuse Leningrad's wartime experience with mythic narratives and images" in order to encourage the population to "understand themselves as 'heroic defenders' of a moral and civilized community."[9] The efforts were mostly successful, as Leningraders who struggled to process their collective trauma adopted this shared myth of heroism and resilience.[10] In the case of the siege of Leningrad the myth of "heroic defenders" did not deny the immense human toll of the siege, but served to provide clarity and justification to the unimaginable catastrophe. The same is certainly true about the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" that narrated the tragedy of the besieged city in the context of the heroism of its defenders and the resilience of its population.

[8] Alexandra Wachter "'This Did not Happen': Survivors of the Siege of Leningrad (1941–1944) and the 'Truth About the Blockade,'" in *Civilians Under Siege from Sarajevo to Troy*, eds. Dowdall A., Horne J. (London, 2018), 38-39.

[9] Lisa Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad,* 11. See also chapter 2.

[10] Kirschenbaum argued that "The myth, whatever its objective truth, offered a means of endowing losses with meaning as the necessary and terrible price of victory. It also raised expectations that the victory would somehow redeem the losses." Ibid., 11.

***First Initiatives to Commemorate the Blockade and the Establishment of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad"***

The first forerunner of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" was a much smaller exhibition "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the German-Fascist Invaders." The exhibition which first opened in November 1941 was organized by a group of officers at the Leningrad House of the Red Army, including historian Lev Rakov.[11] The exhibition was curated by *Lengorkom* secretary Alexei Kuznetsov. It was located in the historical building of the soldiers quarters in the Admiralteysky district of the city and started with a few modest displays. It displayed predominantly trophy weapons and was fairly popular; in December 1941 it was visited by 500 people a day, many of whom were servicemen studying enemy weaponry.[12] Sometime in December it had to close due to the dire conditions in the city and was reopened in the spring with three sections: the first narrated about the fights against the "ancestors of the modern German-Fascist Invaders" – Teutonic and Livonian knights, the second covered the "Treacherous attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union," current situation at the front, partisan movement, and transformation of industry to serve military needs. The third section was devoted to the ideology of fascism and its threat to the Soviet people.[13] After the break in the blockade in January 1943, the exhibition became especially popular: in nine months of 1943 it was visited by 94,500 people.[14]

Another exhibition, "Partisan Activities in the Leningrad Oblast," opened at The Lesgaft Institute of Physical Culture in spring 1943. The Partisan Exhibition was not open for the general

[11] Grigory Mishkevich, "Chernaja byl': (Zapiski cheloveka s nomerom na spine)," in *Pechal'naja pristan'* (Syktyvkar, 1991), 103-104.
[12] TsGAKFFD SPb Ar 46412.
[13] A.A. Shishkin, N.P. Dobrotvorskij, "Gosudarstvennyj memorial'nyj Muzeĭ oborony i blokady Leningrada," *Istorija Peterburga*, 2004, no.1, 72-73.
[14] Ibid., 73.

public due to the current nature of its military content (schemes, maps, photographs of prominent partisans).[15]

In December 1943 the Military Council of the Leningrad Front ordered the reorganization of the exhibition "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People" into "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," and to incorporate parts of the "Partisan Activities in the Leningrad Oblast" into the new exhibition.[16] The order established a special commission responsible for the creation of the exhibition that included the Head of the Political Administration of the Leningrad front general-major D.I. Kholostov, and representatives from the *Lengorkom*: Secretary of *Lengorkom* A.I. Makhanov, Director of the Leningrad Institute of History of the All-Union Communist Party (*Istpart*) A.A. Avvakumov, Head of the Leningrad chapter of the Union of the Soviet artists V.A. Serov, and Head of the Arts Administration of *Lengorispolkom* B.I. Zagursky.[17] Avvakumov was appointed director of the exhibition.

The planning of the exhibition, however, started even before the official order, as Lev Rakov was recalled from the army in November 1943 to work on the exhibition. Before his work at the exhibition, Rakov, an historian, served as an army lector and a head of the Agitation Vehicle at the Leningrad House of the Red Army, giving lectures on the topics of military history to the officers, and participated in battles in the Winter and Summer of 1943. He was appointed to be the main curator (*metodist*) of the exhibition. A large team of brilliant artists, museum specialists, and architects was gathered to work on the exhibition; some were sent straight from the front.

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[15] Lyudmila Kuznets, Evgeniia Turova "Napri͡azheniem vsekh sil," in *Podvig veka*, ed. by Nina Papernaia, (Leningrad, 1969), 254.

[16] Military Council of the Leningrad front and Leningrad City Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Lengorkom) were the main governing bodies of Leningrad during the Siege. See K.A. Boldovskii "Gorkom VKP(b) i sistema upravleniia Leningradom v nachale Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny," *Vestnik of Saint-Petersburg University*. Series 2. History, (2016, issue 2): 61–73.

[17] TSGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 95, l. 74. Cited *in* Yu. L. Bui͡anova, ed. *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy* (Saint-Peterburg, 2019), 164-166.

Director of the suburban Pavlovsk Palace Anna Zelenova was among the group of museum specialists who worked on the initial plans for the exhibition of Defense of Leningrad. As "her" palace was in the occupied areas, she spent most of the blockade at the Isaac cathedral along with many other museum workers taking care of city museums' valuables stored in the cathedral's basement. Zelenova wrote about the process of creating the exhibition, calling it a true combat mission:

> Work began during the preparation of the battle, as a result of which the Nazis were defeated at Leningrad. We worked around the clock in the Officers' House on Liteiny. Nothing like this has ever been experienced by any museum worker. The collection of exhibits took place after the battle and during the battle. The victorious Soviet tanks drove up to the future museum with a roar, and on their armors were the stars, the number of which marked the destroyed enemy tanks.
> The incapacitated spotted fascist "tigers" were dragged by heavy tractors. Still not cooled, but already harmless trophy machine guns were brought up in bulk in trucks. With a mixed feeling of disgust and joy, battered banners with eagles and a swastika were thrown off the vehicles.[18]

Initially, the exhibition was to open at the Engineers' Castle, which was built as the residence of Emperor Paul I. However, in January 1944 it was decided to create the exhibition in the Salt Town, in the space of the former Museum of Socialist Agriculture. The buildings allotted to the exhibition were in poor, bombed-out condition, which was the case for the majority of the buildings in Leningrad.

The official order that established the administrative charter of the exhibition demonstrates that from its very beginning the exhibition was planned as a large research and cultural center of the study of the blockade and defense of Leningrad. The exhibition was defined as "a permanent political-educational and scientific research institution with the goal to represent in a visual way the history of the unprecedented battle of the troops of the Leningrad front and civilian population

[18] Adelaida Elkina, *Sdelaĭte ėto Dl͡ia Men͡ia* (Sankt-Peterburg: Obshchestvo "Znanie," 2013), 179.

with the German invaders. The exhibition works on collecting documents, material artifacts, and art, related to all stages of defense of Leningrad, with the goal of turning the exhibition into a museum." The exhibition had the following objectives:

a. To collect, keep, display materials on [the subject of] defense of Leningrad, ensuring their demonstration to the broad audiences of the working people;
b. To conduct scientific research on the issue of defense of Leningrad and on the study of separate objects;
c. To compile and publish research collections, and public scholarship on the history of the defense of Leningrad, guidebooks, catalogues, and other reference materials for the exhibition;
d. To organize public lectures and to assist organizations interested in receiving materials related to the defense of Leningrad;
e. To organize subsidiary subdivisions – library, photo laboratory, binding, joiner, modeling and other workshops.[19]

"Heroic Defense of Leningrad" opened its doors on April 30th, 1944. By the end of the war, the exhibition had ten sections and 26 rooms that narrated the story of the Siege in chronological order from pre-war Leningrad to the lifting of the Siege and the expulsion of the German and Finnish military forces from the Leningrad front.

In 1945, the structure of the exhibition was as follows:

I. Leningrad – large political, industrial, and cultural center of our country (2 rooms)
II. Leningrad in the first days of the Great Patriotic War (1 room)
III. Battle on the distant approaches to Leningrad (1 room)

[19] TsGALI SPb, f.-277, op.1, d.110, l. 69.

IV. Partisan warfare in the Leningrad oblast (5 rooms)

V. Battle for Leningrad on the close approaches to the city (3 rooms)

VI. Leningrad in the period of the hungry blockade (3 rooms)

VII. Period of liquidation of the consequences of the hungry winter and Leningrad's transformation into a military city (1 room)

VIII. Breaking the blockade of Leningrad (3 rooms)

IX. Year of the crucial turning-point in the Patriotic War (3 rooms)

X. Great victory at Leningrad (5 rooms)

***First Months of the War; Before the Blockade***

The first halls of the exhibition introduced pre-war Leningrad, as "a large political, industrial, and cultural center of the country," and narrated about the preparations for the city's defense after the beginning of German invasion. Among the most important topics covered in these first halls were the formation of the People's Militia and building of the fortifications around the city. The evacuation of the civilian population from Leningrad, which was conducted poorly by the authorities, was presented by only a few photographs related to the evacuation of the children.

In the introductory halls a visitor learned about Leningrad as a center of the three Russian revolutions; the city during the civil war; its industrial development during the Five Year Plans and its cultural significance. In the middle of the first room there was a bust of Sergei Kirov and on the wall behind it a relief of Vladimir Lenin. Besides featuring Soviet political leaders, the first halls also displayed portraits of pre-revolutionary cultural figures who lived in Leningrad, including Alexander Pushkin, and photos of Leningrad's imperial suburbs, such as Peterhof and Gatchina.

Figure 2.3 Room One, Introductory. Leningrad before the war. Ca. 1944-45.

The section that focused on the beginning of the war included topics standard for war museums such as "Treacherous attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union," and "Failure of the blitzkrieg." The hall featured a bust of Zhdanov and a large painting by the artist V.A. Serov with the caption "Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin - forward to victory!" On display was the July 3rd issue of *Leningradskaya Pravda* that published Stalin's first address to the nation since the beginning of the war, in which Stalin referred to the population as "Brothers and Sisters" and called for the Soviet people to "appreciate the full immensity of the danger that threatens our country and […] to mobilize themselves and reorganize all their work on a new, war-time footing, where there can be no mercy to the enemy."[20] Stalin called for the formation of partisan and sabotage groups and the evacuation or destruction of property in occupied regions,

[20] *Leningradskaya Pravda*, July 3, 1941, p.1.

and for the organization of all-volunteer military formations (*Narodnoye opolchenie*) in the cities, citing examples of Moscow and Leningrad as they have already started forming the *opolchenie*. In short, Stalin proclaimed the totality of the patriotic war and called for the full mobilization of people's resources.

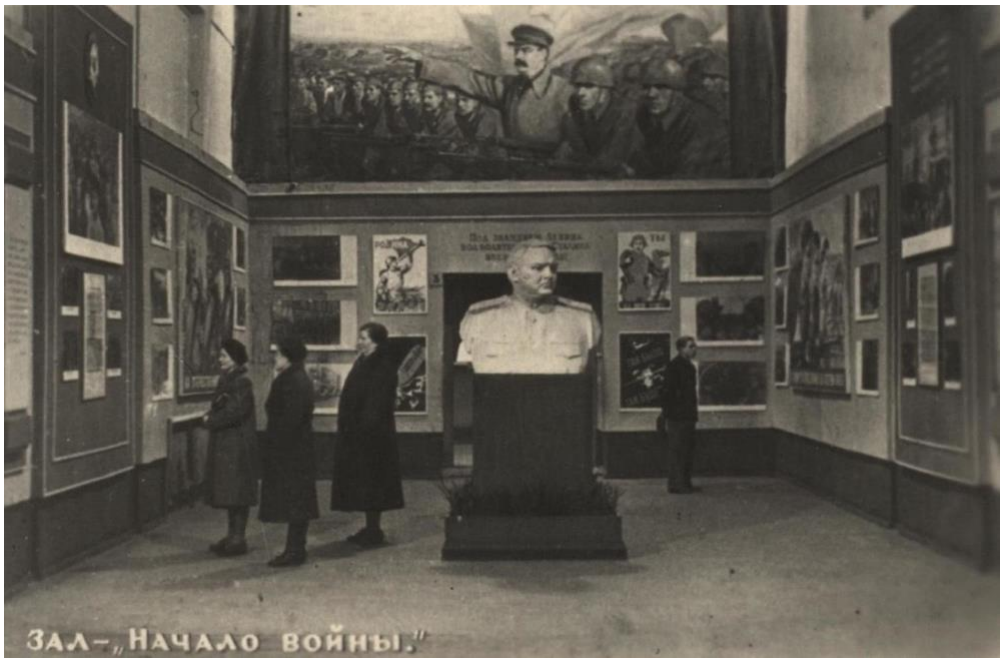


Figure 2.4 Room Three, Beginning of the war. From the 1948 postcards.

The exhibition continued with the "Battle on the Distant Approaches to Leningrad," where the visitor learned how the city prepared for its defense and mobilized for the war. Photographs, maps, electrified models, and art depicted the work of over 500,000 civilian Leningraders who worked on the construction of barricades and fortifications under fire from the enemy. On June 27th, *Lengorispolkom* ordered compulsory labor for all able-bodied men aged sixteen to fifty years and women from sixteen to forty- five who lived in Leningrad and its suburbs, with an exception for the defense plants' workers. Most of the drafted were women.[21]

[21] The categories of women exempt from the conscription were the ones in the last eight weeks of pregnancy or in the first eight weeks after giving birth, breastfeeding mothers and mothers of children younger than eight without other family members who could stay with them. S.I. Avvakumov, ed., *Leningrad v Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭne Sovetskogo Soi͡uza*, t. 1: 22 ii͡unia 1941 g. - 22 ii͡unia 1943 g. (Leningrad, 1944), 15. Despite extremely hard

The evacuation of museum art, children, and factories was represented by a few photographs and drawings, albeit the evacuation of people from the city played a big role in the survival of the population. The evacuation of the children from Leningrad was scarcely presented at the exhibition. City authorities aimed to show it as a well-performed operation at the exhibition, whereas in reality it was a traumatic and even tragic experience for many. In the beginning of the war, Leningrad's population was 2,812,634 people including 591,603 children. The city also acquired additional population as refugees from the occupied suburbs flocked in to Leningrad. Massive evacuations of children from Leningrad began on June 29, 1941. By 7 July, a total of 234,833 Leningrad children, including 105,964 of preschool age, had been sent out of the city. On 18 July, at the Lychkovo station in the southern part of the Leningrad oblast' German planes bombed a train full of children, killing and injuring dozens, which was the first direct contact with the war for many Leningraders.[22]After this, many parents were scared to send their children off. Also, because many groups of children were evacuated to the Leningrad oblast's that soon was occupied, they had to be re-evacuated to the city. By the end of August, 175,400 evacuated children had returned to Leningrad, though others continued to leave. Nikita Lomagin argued that the evacuation in July-August of 1941 was failed by the authorities, who "did not foresee, did not convince, did not organize, finally, did not force those who could no longer help - women, children, old people - to leave the city. […] The people, for the most part, were left to fend for themselves - with the exception of certain facilities and institutions subject to mandatory evacuation, as well as

conditions of work and poor nutrition, the laborers' fortification efforts along the Ostrov- Pskov and Luga Lines were successful in slowing the enemy's attack on the city which in turn gave time to build fortifications around the city itself. Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 40-41.

[22] T͡sGA SPb., f. 7384, op. 3, d. 50, l. 189—193, cited in Andreĭ R. Dzeniskevich, *Leningrad v osade*, (Saint-Petersburg, 1995), 301-305; also see Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 42.

'politically unreliable persons' – the authorities did not evacuate the people."[23] The initial failures with evacuating children to the soon-occupied areas were seemingly caused by a state of unpreparedness for the war by the Leningrad authorities, that generally characterized the initial Soviet response to the German invasion, including Stalin, who misjudged Hitler's intentions to attack.

Philologist and historian, academician Dmitry S. Likhachev in his memoir described how he and his wife hid their children from mandatory evacuation as they did not think the process was well organized, nor did they want to separate from their children.[24] Children younger than 15 were evacuated not with their parents, but based on the "institutions" to which they belonged – schools, preschools, and daycares. Another perspective that demonstrates a different attitude towards the state's directives is a story from the author's own family. In Summer 1941, my paternal grandmother Ksenia Rautian and her seven siblings were evacuated from Leningrad separately from each other. Her youngest brother Vladimir was 14 months old in June 1941, and was evacuated with his daycare to Kostroma Oblast.[25] Other siblings were evacuated to different locations with my grandmother's oldest sister leaving Leningrad last, on July 3rd. Their parents, my great grandparents, were evacuated a week later with their workplace, State Optical Institute, to Kirov. After the evacuation, they were able to gather all their children together in Kirov where they all survived the war, unlike my grandmother's grandmother, uncle, and several other relatives, who stayed in Leningrad and died of starvation. In her memoir, Tatiana Rautian, the oldest sister of my grandmother, tells about her father finding the youngest brother in the daycare on their way to Kirov:

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[23] Nikita Lomagin, *Neizvestnaya blokada* (Saint Petersburg, 2002), 239-241.

[24] Dmitri Likhachev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2016), 190.

[25] About the process of the evacuation also see Mikhail Frolov, "Evacuation from Leningrad to Kostroma in 1941–42," in *Life and death in besieged Leningrad*, 71-85.

> Papa told us later: It was night, four o'clock. Train has stopped. How long is it going to be at this station, 5 minutes or 5 days – unknown. Mama is ill, bed-ridden. Papa decided on a desperate measure. He left the train alone and went to search for Voloden'ka in the daycare. He woke up one of the caretakers … Made her find Volodya among hundreds of other babies. Grabbed him. From the big bag of clothes almost nothing was left… The document was signed about transferring Volodya, and dad ran to the train. … Voloden'ka was so ill, barely alive, he had diarrhea for ten days. He was a year and a half, and couldn't even hold his head, not even mentioning walking.[26]

Tatiana Rautian wrote how her family made decisions on evacuation and the role that belief in the state played in the decisions of many families:

> Why did mama agree to send him alone, so young? Separately from everybody! Why not with me – I was already fifteen! Why did I not tell her, that it would be better, than I would manage? Why did grandmother not leave with papa? And aunt Tanya stayed because she couldn't leave grandmother alone… I ask all these questions now, after all these years… And back then we didn't think, we were doing what we were told. Mama firmly believed and was teaching us, that the state knows better what to do.[27]

In total, between June 29 and August 27, 1941, 626,203 people were evacuated from Leningrad, which included 488,703 Leningraders (including 220,000 children) and 147,500 residents of the Baltic republics and Leningrad oblast'.[28] On August 29th the Germans bombed the last railroad that connected Leningrad and the rest of the country. Despite the poor organization of the evacuations, people who stayed in the city were in much greater danger than outside of it. Mass evacuations resumed only in April 1942.

In order to show how Leningrad's industry switched from civilian to military needs, the room featured a photomontage with the products of four Leningrad factories in May and July 1941 – e.g. the factory that used to make stocking machines before the war was now producing machine guns.[29]

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[26] Tatiana Glebovna Rautian, *Rasskazy babushki Tani*, Book 2 (2020), 22-23.

[27] Ibid., 13.

[28] Kh. Kamalov, et.al, eds. *900 geroicheskikh dneĭ. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov o geroicheskoĭ bor'be trudi͡ashchikhsi͡a Leningrada v 1941- 1944 gg.* (Moscow - Leningrad, 1966), 106.

[29] Leningrad industry made quick conversions during the Summer of 1941. The Kirov Theater factory that produced stage props began making wooden and papier- mâché decoys of weapons, a perfume and makeup factory Grim –

Figure 2.5 Room Four, Battles on the Distant Approaches to Leningrad.

The exhibition narrated about the formation of the People's all-volunteer military formations (*Narodnoye opolchenie*) to support the Red Army in defense of the city.[30] Leningrad was indeed the first city to form civilian divisions separate from the Red Army, and they became the model adopted by the Soviet officials for other cities to follow. The exhibition credited the leadership of the Leningrad party committee (*gorkom*) for the organization of the militia. The militia included workers, intelligentsia, and students and had a high proportion of the party and

mines and Molotov cocktails. The Bolshevik factory before war produced steel, armaments, and tanks, and with beginning of the war focused on mortars, artillery shells, tanks, and Katiusha rockets. Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 190-192.

[30] The *opolchenie* formations are normally characterized by their temporary and defensive nature, i.e. the people who joined the militia were supposed to return to their regular jobs after defensive operations. However, volunteer formations at the Leningrad front were diverse in nature and included destruction battalions, partisan groups, and other military detachments. See Andreĭ R. Dzeniskevich, *Front u zavodskikh sten* (Saint-Petersburg, 1998), 9-15.

Komsomol members.[31] The exhibition highlighted the role of about 30,000 women who enlisted in the first volunteer divisions. Women generally were not officially encouraged to join the militia until late August, but they eventually comprised about a quarter of all who served in the volunteer units (women were also drafted to the Army).

The question of the origins of the *opolchenie* formations and the volunteer aspect of it are controversial. In Leningrad, 100,000 people who were not subject to the compulsory draft volunteered for military service within the first 24 hours of the war. It is undebatable that the enthusiasm of the first volunteers was genuine and caused by their strong patriotism and desire to defend their city. However, the pressure to create volunteer defense formations rose with time, especially after Stalin's radio speech on July 3rd which led to the active recruitment in factories and other city organizations. The recruitment effort was then organized by the city's party leadership, turning it from the mass movement driven by patriotic enthusiasm to an operation that was strictly controlled and encouraged by various party institutions. Richard Bidlack and Nikita Lomagin also argue that the volunteers had a limited understanding of the nature of the service they signed up for due to the lack of information about the enemy's rapid advance in the media, and because of Soviet propaganda's pre-war claims that any potential invader would be quickly expelled. Additionally, the volunteers, especially at the beginning of mobilization, did not suspect

[31]All able bodied men born between 1905 and 1918 were subject to mandatory draft since June 23, 1941. The *opolchenie* members included the men who were not subject to the mandatory draft and women. The volunteers received almost no training, were poorly equipped, and their casualty rate was extremely high. Most volunteers were workers of defense plants who were not drafted because their jobs were essential to the military effort. Other categories included men older than 50 years of age, teenagers, and children of purged officers. The active campaign to recruit the workers for the *opolchenie* conflicted with industrial mobilization efforts as it significantly increased the labor shortage at the Leningrad factories. The party agitators actively recruited the wives of the workers who were deployed for the volunteer divisions to take their jobs, but most married women were already employed. Children as young as 12 also began working at the factories along with pensioners. See Andreĭ R. Dzeniskevich, *Voennaia piatiletka rabochikh Leningrada. 1941-1945* (Leningrad, 1972).

that they would be thrown on the front lines with little to no training armed with inadequate weapons and equipment.[32]

Historian Mikhail Rabinovich, drafted to the Army in September 1941, wrote in his memoir that *opolchenie* turned out to be "too costly of a measure" due to the use of the untrained and inadequately armed people who were "thrown into the fire and most of them died." Referring to the Soviet terror against the intelligentsia before the war and the large amount of killed students and members of intelligentsia unfit for the army but drafted to *opolchenie,* Rabinovich called it a "new, accidental or deliberate, cleansing of Leningrad from the intelligentsia."[33]

The section "Battle on the Close Approaches to Leningrad" covered the period from late August through the end of September 1941. On display were maps and schemes of the battles, art, and photographs of the military and city leaders. The first room of the section focused on the address by Kliment Voroshilov (then commander of the short-lived Northwestern Direction that included the Leningrad front), Andrei Zhdanov, and Pyotr Popkov "To all workers of the city of Lenin," in which they warned the townspeople that the enemy might try to seize the city very soon and "called on Leningraders, not sparing their lives, fight the enemy, create new detachments of the *narodnoye opolchenie,* to increase the production of weapons and ammunition, to strengthen anti-aircraft and anti-chemical defense of the city, increase vigilance and organization."[34]

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[32] See Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade,* 333-334. Dzeniskevich cites cases when, in order to prevent highly qualified workers from being enlisted, the factory managers, who were required by the city's leadership to provide high numbers of volunteers but also had to keep up with required production numbers, used various methods of coercion and lies to "volunteer" less experienced or qualified workers. *Front u zavodskikh sten,* 33.

[33] Rabinovich, *Vospominanija dolgoj zhizni,* 165.

[34] Rakov, *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada,"* 45.

Diarist Lubov Shaporina[35] wrote about the rumors she heard about workers' reaction to the address: "When workers at the Bolshevik factory were gathered at a rally in regards to Voroshilov's address, the speaker couldn't talk. His speech about defending Leningrad and the *opolchenie* was met with the outcries: 'Should we go against the Germans with pitchforks like against the French [in the war of 1812]? Fighting against tanks and planes with pitchforks? We were betrayed.' And at the rally at the Porcelain factory the only ones who yelled about patriotism were the ones who already had evacuation tickets. Everyone else was silent." [36] By the end of the summer, the workers were well aware of the catastrophic situation with supplies and weapons in the militia divisions. Additionally, all able-bodied men were already mobilized in one way or another, and the only ones left were the elderly, physically unfit, and women.

A day before addressing the people of the city, Voroshilov and Zhdanov secretly issued an order on various aspects of Leningrad's defense. The order formed a Leningrad Military Defense Council, and, among other measures, directed to create 150 workers' battalions of 600 people each, that would include women-volunteers and teenagers. Voroshilov ordered to arm the battalions with rifles, machine guns, grenades, bottles with a combustible mixture, and, indeed, melee weapons: "sabers, daggers, pikes, etc."[37]

A modern visitor would probably find some of the presented themes too trivial and, perhaps, boring. However, most local visitors of the exhibition in 1944 saw the artistic

[35] Lubov Shaporina (1879-1967) - theater artist and translator, created the first puppet theater in Russia in 1919. Shaporina lived through the Blockade and all Stalinist waves of terror, which she documented in her diary.
[36] Lubov Shaporina et al, *Dnevnik* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), vol. 1, 247, 256.
[37] K.A. Boldovskiĭ, ed., *Blokada v reshenii͡akh rukovodi͡ashchikh partiĭnykh organov Leningrada. 1941-1944 gg*. Vol I. ( Saint-Petersburg, 2019), 234-235. Voroshilov and Zhdanov's order created the Leningrad Military Defense Council but did not include themselves as members of it, which alarmed and angered Stalin who considered it irresponsible as they were the two highest officials in the city. Stalin forced Voroshilov and Zhdanov to join the Council. In general, Stalin did not think that Voroshilov adequately managed the military situation. See Bidlack, Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 44.

representation of their own traumatic experiences. In her memoir, Nina Nonina, one of the first tour guides of the exhibition, describes one of the tours for a group of Leningraders. Like Luknitstky, Nonina relates the sense of familiarity and shared memory that visitors felt at the exhibition; the big narrative presented by the exhibition's workers has resonated and linked with its visitors:

> I speak to the audience without raising my voice, my phrases are laconic and stern.
> What does this woman remember when she is looking at the painting "Building Fortifications Around Leningrad"? Probably, the same as me. Then, in 1941, we called it simply "on the trenches." Fascist pilots shot women in nap-of-the-earth, point blank. They threw us leaflets that were insolent and very low-quality: "Ladies, don't dig ditches," etc. Yes, that's how it was. Now there is a thread of mutual trust and understanding between me and the [touring] group. And this thread will grow stronger. From one room to another, their gratitude to the Museum for the truth will grow. There is a pride of belonging: see what fascism has placed on our shoulders, hearts, souls, minds! But we have withstood. Both the living, and the dead – we have withstood.[38]

The first halls of the exhibition covered pre-war history of Leningrad and the beginning of the war, including preparation of the city's population to its defense, such as the building of fortifications and formation of the volunteer *opolchenie*, as well as the evacuation of organizations, factories, art, and children from Leningrad. The inadequate weaponry or the amount of casualties among the members of the armed forces were not mentioned in the exhibition. The guide, however, emphasized that the German troops reached Leningrad at the cost of huge losses and failed at the storming attempt due to the heroic actions of the Red Army, Red Fleet, and *opolchenie*. Other events at the beginning of the war were also narrated as successful operations of the city's leadership, reinforcing a positive representation of the initial governmental response to the war.

[38] Nonina, *Rekviem Muzeĭ u* (Jerusalem, 2003), 16-17. My deepest gratitude to Dr. Vladimir Khazan and Dr. Viktor Kelner, ז״ל who assisted me in accessing this rare publication.

***The Partisans***

As it was for the Ukrainian and Belarussian leadership, propaganda of the partisan warfare was extremely important to the leadership of the city as partisans were a large part of the Soviet patriotic lore that painted them as "people's avengers." In spring 1942, *Lenoblispolkom* and the Union of Artists began to regularly send artists and sculptors to observe partisan warfare in order to gather materials and create themed art. The abundant amount of partisan-themed art was also caused by the genuine fascination and interest of the artists in the "people's avengers." As artist Vladimir Serov reminisced, artists and partisans had a "tight friendship":

> Many pieces of art were created on the topic of partisans. We connected with the partisans: artists worked on the partisan recreation base near Leningrad. A relatively big group of artists was sent to the partisan bases outside of the city, behind the blockade pale. Some artists worked in the enemy's rear among the partisans. In Leningrad, the Union of Artists became a spot where artists met partisans who traveled to the city and became our frequent guests. [39]

The section devoted to Partisan Warfare in the Leningrad Oblast was in a way separated from the rest of the exhibition as it narrated about the events outside of the city. It was also removed from the general chronological narrative of the exhibition as the section covered the history of partisan activities throughout the war. The section was curated by a prominent partisan leader, then lieutenant colonel, Konstantin Karistky.

The first two rooms highlighted German atrocities in the occupied territories of the Leningrad Oblast. On display were the photographs "Shooting of Soviet citizens by Hitler's Executioners," and "Group of Partisans of the 3rd Brigade over the Corpses of the Gavrilov Family, Tortured by the Germans in the village of Oklad, Leningrad Oblast." The visitor also learnt about the so-called German "new order" - the term, from German *Neuordnung*, that was used to

[39] Vladimir Serov, "*Vmeste s narodom"* in *Khudozhniki goroda-fronta*, ed. Iosif Brodskiĭ (Leningrad, 1973), 10.

demonstrate the ways in which the Germans ruled the occupied areas. The items here included photographs and artifacts that demonstrated the deportations of people to Germany for slave work, the destruction of towns and villages, and other atrocities. The message conveyed was clear – death is better than German occupation in captivity. One of the partisan stories highlighted in this section was about a female partisan Antonina Petrova, who was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union for killing herself with a grenade on November 4th, 1941 to avoid being captured by the Germans after running out of ammunition.

Figure 2.6 Vladimir Serov in front of his painting *Partisanka*, 1943. The painting was on display at the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad before its closure.

The next room devoted to the partisans was the largest and demonstrated "the heroic struggle of the Leningrad partisans, starting from the first partisan detachments and groups to units

of many thousands of people's avengers."[40] The first three stands on the left side were devoted to the "organizers of the partisan movement in the Leningrad oblast": Andrei Zhdanov, Alexei Kuznetsov (purged in the Leningrad Affair, executed in 1950), and Mikhail Nikitin (purged in the Leningrad Affair, executed in 1950). The room narrated stories of many partisan brigades and detachments in detail, focusing on the railroad diversions and on the role of the local population in supporting the partisans. The room also displayed trophy weapons, captured by the partisans, as well as captured personal items of the Germans, such as a general's shoulder straps, caps, and medals, including Iron Crosses, and badges "For Crimea," "Wound badge," "For the Winter Campaign," etc.


Figure 2.7 Partisan Section. Panorama "Railroad War." From the 1948 series of postcards.

The final room of the partisan section of the museum narrated about the underground activities of the "Leningrad communists" in the occupied areas. On display were samples from 38

[40] Ibid, 28.

underground newspapers, and portraits and photographs of the party members who were active in the underground.

Generally, the story told in the partisan section was very similar to the ways in which the topic was covered in the Kyiv and Minsk museums, focusing on the Soviet heroes, German atrocities, railroad warfare, role of the Bolshevik party, and the underground press.

***Inside the Circle: The Bombings***

The experiences of the population in the besieged city and the extreme hardships they experienced were represented by the topics of artillery and air attacks on the city and the starvation. The ideological guidelines for these topics required emphasis on the population's resilience against the horrors of the siege, rather than its victimhood.

In one of the first halls the exhibition narrated about the beginning of the bombing and shelling and development of MPVO (Local Antiaircraft Defense). The table showed that between September and December of 1941, the Germans dropped 100,000 incendiary bombs, and over 3,500 high-explosive bombs on the city. The city officials formed MPVO teams and self-defense groups. Nine-tenths of the incendiary bombs dropped on the city were put out by the population, not only by adults, but also by teenagers. According to Shaporina, the teenagers were indeed excited to put out the bombs: "Boys and adolescents are keen on putting out bombs and, they say, are successful at it. Somewhere in our area, a fifteen-year-old girl with a gumboil ran up to the attic before anyone else and put out the bomb, and the boys were terribly envious: not only a girl, but with a gumboil!" [41]

The enemy's weapons, including aerial bombs and parachute mines, were also featured as seen in the photograph of one of the rooms. Disarmed bombs were tagged with the surnames of

[41] Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 275.

the people who disarmed them. The weapons were accompanied by the photographs of the bombarded city in order to demonstrate the barbarity of the invaders.

Figure 2.8 Room in the section “Battles on the Close Approaches to Leningrad”


Figure 2.9 This stand shows mines and bombs that were thrown on Leningrad by German aircraft alongside photographs of the city damaged by the air attacks

The exhibition returned to the narrative of air attacks on the city in its section of 1943, reminding its visitors that the Soviet offensive campaign did not stop suffering in the city. One of the most memorable halls featured a realistic model, "Shelling of Nevsky Prospect," where the visitor looked through a shell hole in the brick wall with the view of the intersection of Nevsky Prospect and Sadovaya Street with the tram. On July 17, 1943 the intersection was bombed and 60 people were killed in the tram and around the tram stop. On the right side of the hole there was a damaged philharmonic poster that illustrated the continuation of cultural life and activities in the besieged city, but also the ways in which said activities were interrupted. On the left side, the visitor saw a poster with a wounded child and the warning sign "Citizens! During shelling this side of the street is the most dangerous." The signs were stenciled on the sides of streets where pedestrians were most vulnerable from artillery shells fired from German positions to the south of the city and became one of the most recognizable visual symbols of the siege. The text above the hole said "During the blockade the fascists shot about 150,000 heavy shells at Leningrad." During the tour the visitors saw the model with sound effects imitating the air raid: the clicking of a metronome, the howling of a siren, and then the sound of explosion.[42] These innovative sound effects created a theatrical, or even an immersive experience for the exhibition's visitors.

The busy intersection of Nevsky and Sadovaya was frequently targeted by the Germans, which explains its choice for the exhibition. Anna Zelenova, director of the Pavlovsk Palace who took part in the early efforts of the exhibition's organization, wrote in her diary about the death of her friend and fellow museum specialist Irina Yanchenko, keeper at the Gatchina Palace, who was killed while she was walking home with her son from her night shift at the Isaac Cathedral:

> August 10, 1943. On Monday Irina Yanchenko did not come to turn of duty. We started to look for her in the hospital, but then a policeman brought her purse and said she was killed

[42] During the siege, the sound of a metronome was transmitted by the Leningrad radio during pauses between radio broadcasts and during air raids.

on August 8 at 12 pm on the corner of Nevsky and Sadovaya. Her son, five year old Petya was wounded and is in the hospital. Which one? I went to the morgue […]. Several times I walked by Irina, recognized her dress, but still didn't believe it was her, kept hoping it's just the same dress.

August 15, 1943. Today we buried Irina Yanchenko under the constant howl and whistle of the shells. As we left her house – bombing, came to the cemetery – combined artillery shelling and bombing. We were hiding between the graves and the remnants of the buried Leningraders with tombstones and crosses were flying around us. Right as we buried Irina – bombing again. Dirt from the explosions poured behind my glasses. After the funeral I went to the hospital to [visit] Petya Yanchenko. As a very seriously wounded [patient], Peten'ka is staying in a separate ward, next to another one with about 7-8 beds. On every one of [these beds] there are Leningrad's children, injured by the war. Peten'ka asked when is his mama coming. I tried to distract him with some simple food gifts I brought for him, while I felt that my shoes were still covered with the dirt from the grave of his mother.[43]


Figure 2.10 Model "Artillery Shelling of the City." Artist Dzhakov. From the 1948 series of postcards.

[43] Elkina, *Sdelaĭte èto Dlia Menia*, 132-134.

In the room there was a large stand with five maps that demonstrated different stages of the city's shelling and bombing – from the incendiary bombs that were most commonly used by the enemy in the first months of the siege, to the "systematic shelling of the central districts" of the city. There was also a central map that showed the results of the air attacks that targeted civilian institutions – schools, institutions of higher educations, hospitals, etc. These maps, the guidebook's authors argued, "represent an indictment against the Fascist barbarians."[44] Indeed, the information about bombings of the civilian infrastructure and cultural heritage, including the Hermitage museum, churches and cemeteries was used by the Soviet prosecution at the Nuremberg trials.

***Inside the Circle: Hunger and Heroism***

The section "Leningrad in the period of the hungry blockade" was arguably the most tragic in the museum, although the museum's guide emphasized that the materials of the section "represent the courage and resilience of Leningraders in the most difficult days of city life in the Fall and Winter of 1941-1942."[45] The narrative here presented both sides - life and death, destruction and resilience - during the most difficult months of the city's siege. In the first room the visitor saw some of the shells that the Germans relentlessly fired at the city right next to a large mural of the destroyed building. Next to it, the visitor saw a painting, a curious fate of which quite literally illustrated the arbitrary nature of Stalinist terror. The painting demonstrated the failure of the German plan to cut off communication between Leningrad and the rest of the country. To ensure communication, the telegraph cable was installed through the remaining "strip of land and along the bottom of Lake Ladoga." The use of the telegraph apparatus was the main detail on the painting by artist Babasyuk "A. A. Zhdanov and A. A. Kuznetsov at the direct line during a

[44] Rakov, *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada"* 94-96.
[45] Ibid., 56.

conversation with Moscow." After Kuznetsov was purged in the Leningrad Affair, his figure was painted over and turned into a wall.[46]

The guide emphasized the heroism of the population of the besieged city: "Heavy shelling did not shake the courage of the Leningraders. The atrocities of the fascist murderers caused not fear and turmoil, but burning hatred and thirst for revenge. Along with the bombing and shelling, the German command tried to conduct Hitler's monstrous plan: to surround Leningrad with the blockade's ring, cut it off from the vital centers of the country, and suffocate it with hunger."[47]

Figure 2.11 Room in the section "Leningrad during the Hungry Blockade"

As Pavel Luknitsky wrote in his diary, there were only a few displays devoted to the actual hunger during the siege, but probably the one that left the biggest impression on the visitors showcased Leningrad's bread. Behind a display's frost-covered glass, a visitor saw a model of a

[46] Buĭanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 90.
[47] Ibid., 58.

bakery. There was  a scale with a 125 gram piece of bread – the daily food allotment for most Leningraders during the most severe period of the blockade.[48] A diagram next to it showed how the allotments of bread gradually increased in connection with the opening and the work of the Ladoga route. Between November 1941 and March 1942 the allotment increased from 125 to 400 grams for office workers and dependents, and from 250 to 500 grams for industrial workers. The bread allotments were significantly different for various categories of people. In the hungriest November-December 1941, the daily bread ration for workers, engineers, and technicians was 250 grams, for workers in "hot" workshops  - 375 grams, for office workers, adult dependents (officially unemployed) and children under 12 years  - 125 grams.[49] Another diagram with a laboratory cylinder showed the contents of the blockade bread: only 50% of it was "defective" rye flour, the remaining 50% - various admixtures, like sawdust, oilcake, malt, and cellulose.

Poet Vera Inber[50] who visited the exhibition on June 6th, 1944 with her husband Ivan Strashun, wrote in her diary that they spent the longest time looking at the bakery display. [51] After the visit, she went to the Summer garden and sat on a bench to rest. Inber describes a short dialogue

[48] On the system of the food distribution in besieged Leningrad see Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 262-264.

[49] Ibid., 413.

[50] Vera Inber (1890-1972)  - a Soviet poet, writer and journalist. A marginal writer before the war, she became famous for her wartime poetry written in besieged Leningrad. Inber spent the whole blockade in Leningrad with her third husband Ivan Strashun, doctor, director of the First Medical Institute in relatively privileged conditions due to her husband's status. Inber was a cousin of Leon Trotsky. Shaporina wrote in her diary that during the siege, Inber fed her cat fish oil and had a 1943 New Year's celebration with "pies, vodka, etc., lots of bread."  Lubov Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 389, vol. 2, 360.

[51] Inber's diary *Pochti tri goda: Leningradsky dnevnik* was published for the first time right after the war in 1946, and was self-censored to the highest degree, yet she was still criticized by many for the morbidity of her content. Alexis Peri, *The War Within* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 247-248. Alexis Peri argues that Inber was "a principal author of what the historian Lisa Kirschenbaum called the myth of the siege of Leningrad." Alexis Peri, "The Art of Revision: How Vera Inber Scripted the Siege and Her Self during World War II." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 19, no. 1 (2018), 144; also see Polina Barskova, *Besieged Leningrad: Aesthetic Responses to Urban Disaster* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2017) 37, 194.

with a woman that reminded her of the display: "A woman sat next to me. She was yellow, pale with a dyspnea. It was still a blockade dyspnea. I remembered: 50 percent defective rye flour…"[52]

In another display, a visitor saw a variety of the non-edible items that *blokadniki* used for subsistence: joiner's glue, industrial raw materials, such as cellulose, and textile machine belts made out of pigskin that were boiled to make "soup." The displays were accompanied by photographs of the frozen and besieged city and its emaciated inhabitants. The guide to the exhibition asserted: "Party and Soviet organizations of Leningrad took all measures to save people from hunger. All resources of the city were used for this goal."[53] In her memoir, Nina Nonina wrote about the ambivalent feelings among siege survivors in regards to the blockade "delicacies":

> Visitors [from my tour group] say: 'Well, we could only dream about it!' True, I was able to try joiner's glue only twice. And oil meal? By the order of Leningrad's city executive committee, 'the most prominent scientists and artists of the city' received 500 grams of oil meal each. Yes, the "fathers" of the city "threw" 500 grams of oil meal to the most prominent scientists and artists of the city.[54]

Nonina's memoir was written decades after the siege when the information about good nutrition of Smolny's leaders during the siege was widely published, which explains her almost cynical approach to the "delicacies." However, even in 1944-1949 the city's inhabitants knew that nobody in the city's highest echelon of leadership had died of starvation.[55] NKVD surveillance reports from the first blockade winter note a significant increase in anti-governmental feelings in the city, as people were expressing beliefs that the leaders ate and lived well, while the workers

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[52] Vera Inber, *Pochti tri goda: Leningradsky dnevnik* (Moscow: Sov. Rossiia, 1968), 296-297.

[53] Rakov, *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada*, 65.

[54] Nonina, *Rekviem muzeiu* (Jerusalem, 2003), 29.

[55] Historian and writer Vladislav Glinka wrote in his blockade memoir that Natalia Vasilievna Krandievskaya-Tolstaya told him in the summer of 1943 that during the hungry winter of 1941-42 her neighbor Piotr Popkov would bring his cat 200 grams of fresh meat every day coming home from Smolny. Vladislav Glinka, *Vospominaniia o blockade* (Saint-Petersburg, 2015), 148. On special allotments and food distribution to selected people in the city see Nikita Lomagin, *V tiskakh goloda : blokada Leningrada v dokumentakh germanskikh spetssluzhb, NKVD i pis'makh leningradtsev*, (Moscow, 2019), 30-34. Bidlack and Lomagin write that "Party headquarters at Smolny—the peak of power and privilege in the city—had a wide range of food in abundant supply…. Zhdanov reportedly received regular shipments of fresh food by airplane throughout the siege period." *The Leningrad Blockade*, 300-301.

were dying from starvation.[56] One can assume that the guide's assertion that Leningrad's leaders took all measures to "save people from starvation" was not taken positively by the majority of the survivors.

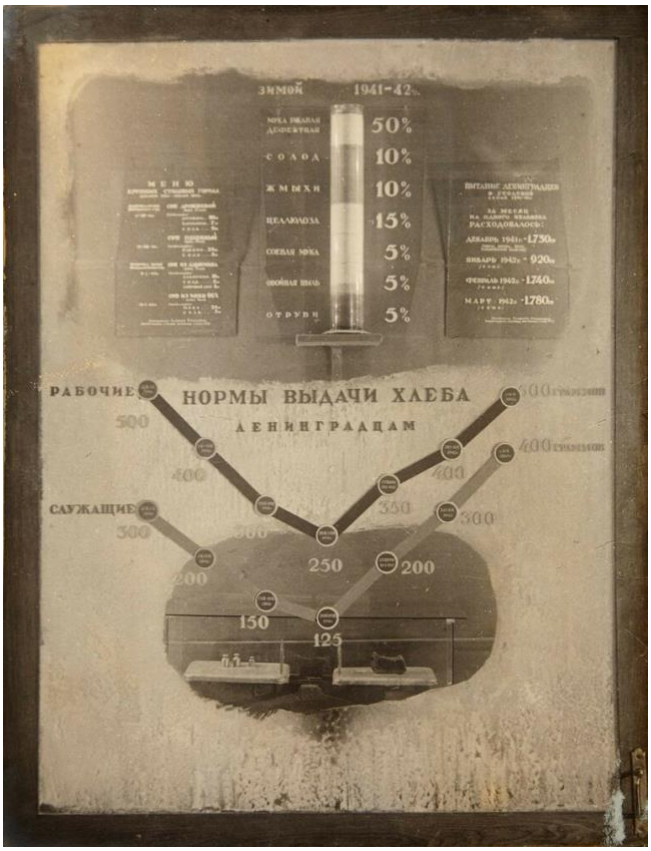


Figure 2.12 Display "Norms of bread distribution" with the bread scale

The rest of the section "Hungry Blockade" was devoted to Lake Ladoga's "Road of Life." When the Germans blocked Leningrad from the rest of the country, the only transportation route available for supply deliveries and evacuation of the population was Lake Ladoga. During the winter the Soviets utilized the ice road across the lake, and during the warmer months of the navigable period, the ferry flotilla system. Due to its importance, the route was called the Road of

[56] Nikita Lomagin, *V tiskakh goloda*, 189-200. Also see John Barber, "War, Public Opinion and the Struggle for Survival 1941–45: The Case of Leningrad," in *Russia in the Age of Wars*, ed. Silvio Pons and Andrea Romano (Milan, 2000).

Life, although according to Likhachev, *blodadniki* called it the Road of Death. In his memoir he wrote about the evacuations by car across Lake Ladoga during the winter of 1941-42:

> This ice road was called the road of death (and not at all the road of life, as our writers later called it). The Germans fired at it, the road was covered with snow, cars often fell into openings (after all, they were driving at night). They said that one mother went crazy: she was driving in the second car, and her children were driving in the first, and this first car, in front of her eyes, fell through the ice. Her car quickly drove around the ice hole, where her children writhed under the water, and rushed by without stopping. […] A. N. Lozanova (a folklorist) lost her husband on this road. She drove him in a children's sleigh, since he could no longer walk. On the other side of Ladoga she left him on the sleigh along with the suitcases and went to get bread. When she returned there was no bread, no sleigh, no husband, no suitcases. They robbed people, took their suitcases from the exhausted, and then lowered them under the ice. There were a lot of robberies. At every step there were infamy and nobility, self-sacrifice and extreme selfishness, theft and honesty. [57]

As Pavel Luknitsky noted referring to the many victims who died on the Road of Life due to Nazi shelling and thin ice accidents, "Ladoga and 'The Road of Life' were presented [in the exhibition] in a variety of ways, but the tragic events of which there were plenty in this route of evacuees were not shown here."[58] The materials on the Road of Life were supposed to illustrate the heroic resilience and ingenuity of the Leningraders, which was represented by Zhdanov's quote on display: "Hitler's plan to seize the city by a rapid storm failed, and so did his misanthropic plan to strangle the city with a hunger blockade."[59] Maps, art, and photographs demonstrated the high efficiency of the transportation route and the heroism of its builders and defenders. Here the visitor saw an electrified map of the lake with the ice routes, Soviet anti-aircraft batteries, and fire points of the enemy's positions and an impressive interactive panorama of an ice road with moving vehicles and changing lights.

While not concealing the horrible truth, the section "Hungry Blockade" showed hunger in just a few displays, instead prioritizing the narratives of resilience and heroism. For example, the

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[57] Dmitri Likhachev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2016), 203.
[58] Pavel Luknitskii, *Leningrad deĭstvuet. Frontovoĭ dnevnik*, (Moscow, 1976), 468.
[59] *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada,"* 67.

shelling, which, while horrific and traumatizing, took many fewer lives than starvation, but was represented more significantly in the materials of the exhibition, and, later, the museum.[60] The same was true in the local media reporting during the blockade.[61]

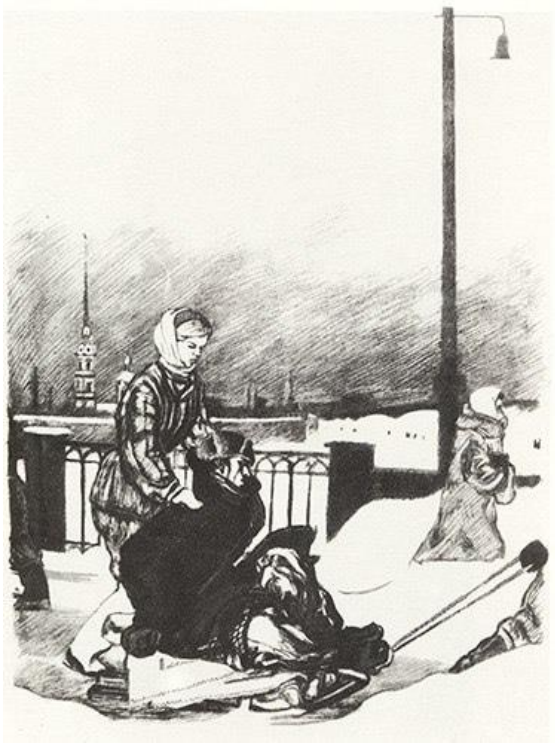

Figure 2.13 "To the Hospital." Artist Alexei Pakhomov, 1942. Pakhomov's graphics were on display from the very beginning of the museum

[60] According to the official report prepared by a special Leningrad city commission in 1945 and presented at the Nuremberg trials, the amount of civilian deaths from shelling and bombing was 16,747, from starvation – 632,253. TSGA SPb, f. 8557, op. 6, d. 1108, l. 46—47. The version of the report that was published in 1945 included numbers only for the victims who were killed by the shelling and bombing while the total amount of the accounted victims was kept secret from the Soviet public. The figure was, however, presented at the Nuremberg trial in February 1946 by the Soviet prosecutor L.N. Smirnov and was subsequently published in the Soviet Union six years later in the collection of materials from the Nuremberg trials. See *Akt Leningradskoĭ gorodskoĭ komissii o prednamerennom istreblenii nemet͡sko-fashistskimi varvarami mirnykh zhiteleĭ Leningrada i ushcherbe, nanesennom khozi͡aĭstvu i kul'turno-istoricheskim pami͡atnikam goroda za period voĭny i blokady*, (Leningrad, 1945); K.P. Gorshenin, ed., *Niurnbergskiĭ prot͡sess. Sbornik materialov*. Vol.1. (Moscow, 1952), 582, 584. For the first time these numbers were contested by two Leningrad historians, Valentin M. Kovalchuk and Gennadii L. Sobolev, in their article "Leningradskiĭ 'rekviem'", *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 12, (December, 1965): 191-194. Kovalchuk and Sobolev estimated the amount of starvation victims in the city to be not less than 800,000. Most modern historians place the total amount of Leningrad victims to be around 1,000,000 people. See Gennadii L. Sobolev, "Blokada Leningrada: postizhenie pravdy," *Modern history of Russia*, no 2 (2012): 72-84. On treatment of the blockade at the Nuremberg trials see Nikita Lomagin, *Neĭzvestnaia blokada*, (Saint-Petersburg, 2004). On mortality calculations also see Bidlack and Lomagin, 270-273.

[61] Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad*, 52.

The subdued representation of hunger at the exhibition was caused by the combination of censorship and self-censorship, as well as the prevalence of the internalized myth of Heroic Leningrad that started to take shape from the very beginning of the siege.[62] The creators of the museum worked under strict control of the city and Party authorities – all exposition plans and texts had to be approved by a bureau of *Lengorkom*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the All-Union official guidelines for the museums emphasized the discourse of heroism. Additionally, while the German atrocities against the civilian population were prominently represented in propaganda including other war museums, the famine in a major Soviet city was a unique phenomenon which Moscow's officials chose to conceal from both domestic and international audiences. When in March 1942 Olga Berggolts visited Moscow and wrote in her diary about the "conspiracy of silence around Leningrad":

> Here they do not tell the truth about Leningrad, they do not talk about hunger, and without it there is no "heroics" of Leningrad. (I put the word "heroics" in quotes only because I believe that heroism does not exist in the world at all.) […]
> And for the word - the truthful word about Leningrad - it seems that the time has not come... Will it come at all? We can hope.[63]

Nikita Lomagin noted that the tragedy of Leningrad was not mentioned in Molotov's Notes on German Atrocities addressed to the allies in January-April 1942. Lomagin argued that conditions in Leningrad were concealed from the population and the international community because the admission of mass death in Leningrad could negatively affect the morale not only in the ranks of the defenders of the city but in the whole country.[64] Another historian of the siege argued that "by introducing strict censorship on the information about the catastrophic situation in

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[62] The "prevalence" here does not mean that there was a complete absence of voices that rejected the discourse of heroism, albeit they were private. E.g. see Kirschenbaum, *ibid.*, 53-54.
[63] Berggol'ts, Olʹga, and Nataliia Sokolovskaya, *Ol'ga, Zapretny Dnevnik: Dnevniki, Pis'ma, Proza, Izbrannye Stikhotvoreniia i Poemy Olgi Berggol't*s (Sankt-Peterburg, 2011), 70.
[64] Nikita Lomagin, *Neĭzvestnai͡a blokad*a, (Saint-Petersburg, 2004), 6-7.

Leningrad, the [central government] indirectly admitted its guilt in not taking [appropriate] measures to provide the city with food and fuel, and a timely mass evacuation of the population."[65] Despite being aware of the catastrophic situation in Leningrad, Stalin, who did not concern himself with the lives of civilians, did not agree to allocate resources for development of the Ladoga ice road on January 22, 1942.[66]

Local officials were also hesitant to acknowledge the human toll of starvation as it was evidence of their failures and mistakes, including failure to disperse food supplies from the flammable Badaev warehouses before the beginning of bombardment. In April 1942, the "fathers of the city," including Zhdanov, Kuznetsov, and Popkov, watched the documentary film *Leningrad in Battle* in a private screening and demanded the replacement of the footage that showed "lines in front of bread shops, frozen cars stalled on the ice road, and snowed-in trolley cars" with scenes that showed "enthusiastic workers, successful production, and tanks rolling straight from the factory to the front." [67] Excerpts from the film were shown at the exhibition of defense.

The city's leaders deliberately undervalued or failed to provide the figures of the human victims, although this tendency was not unique for Leningrad, as officials routinely underestimated the human toll of the war throughout the Soviet Union. In February 1944, *The New York Times* correspondent William H. Lawrence reported that Popkov gave the number of casualties from shelling and bombing as 20,000, which included 5,000 killed and 15,000 wounded. *The Times* also reported that according to Popkov "the majority" of the population were evacuated at the start of the war, leaving only essential personnel in the city; as we know, Popkov lied. He declined to

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[65] Andrei P. Kri͡ukovskikh, "Leningradskai͡a partiĭnai͡a organizat͡sii͡a v gody voĭny," in *Leningradskai͡a ėpopei͡a* (Saint-Petersburg, 1995), 70.

[66] Bidlack, Lomagin *The Leningrad Blockade*, 405.

[67] Ibid., 355. See the original scenario of the film TsGALI SPb, F. 126, op. 1, d. 2, ll 1–6. Lisa Kirschenbaum, argues that the 'film provided a panoramic telling of the Leningrad epic that used scenes of personal hardship to visually authenticate and commemorate the myth of the hero city." *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad*, 91.

provide the figure of the city's current population citing military secrecy and when asked about the reported number of 2,000,000 victims of hunger in Leningrad, he answered that it was "exaggerated many times."[68]

*The Times* correspondent was among the group of Allied reporters who arrived in Leningrad in February 1944. During their visit they were shown the sites of battles at the Leningrad front and evidence of destruction caused by German shelling and bombing. Collecting information related to hunger was discouraged. *Toronto Star* reporter Davis Jerome, who approached women in the city with questions about food allotments and starvation during the winter of 1941-42 was deemed a spy collecting economic intelligence in a report of the Soviet secret police.[69]

Among the visiting correspondents was Alexander Werth who had previously visited the besieged city in the fall of 1943 and met with Popkov. When Werth asked the "Mayor of Leningrad" how many people died in the winter of 1941-1942, he "received no answer, except that 'a few hundred thousands' was as much as could be said for the present."[70]

Dwight D. Eisenhower, who visited Leningrad in August 1945, reported that he was given a figure of 350,000 victims of starvation with "many more who were killed and wounded." By the time of Eisenhower's visit in August 1945 the official report accounted for 632,253 victims of hunger in Leningrad which was already published for internal, classified, circulation. However, according to Eisenhower, the number of 350,000 victims was "constantly repeated" by the

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[68] *The New York Times*, February 14, 1944. Historian, keeper at the Hermitage, and a good friend of Lev Rakov Vladislav Glinka, as a representative from the Writers' Union, was assigned to accompany foreign correspondents who arrived to Leningrad in February 1944 and gave his own account of the meeting testifying to Popkov's cynical attitude. Glinka, *Vospominaniia o blockade*, 145-46.

[69] N.B. Lebedeva and N.Yu. Cherepenina, eds., *Ot voĭny k miru. Leningrad, 1944-1945: Arkhivnye dokumenty o vosstanovlenii goroda* (Saint-Peterburg, 2013), 21-22.

[70] Alexander Werth, *Leningrad* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1944), 155.

"civilian officials of Leningrad who joined the military commanders to act as our local hosts." Eisenhower and his companions were struck that:

> in speaking of Leningrad's losses every citizen did so with a tone of pride and satisfaction in his voice. The pride, of course, was understandable in view of the heroic endurance that had defeated the enemy at that vital point; but it was more difficult to grasp the reasons for satisfaction, even though it was explained to us that the city, by paying such a tremendous price, had proved itself "worthy of Mother Russia."[71]

Echoing Berggolt's' "conspiracy of silence" sentiment, Dmitry Likhachev wrote that the truth about the blockade of Leningrad would never be published, meaning the truth about hunger: "The blockade of Leningrad is made into pap. Vera Inber's *Pulkovo Meridian* is Odessa pap.[72] There is something approaching the truth in the notes of the head of the dissecting room of the Erisman hospital, which were printed in Zvezda in 1944 or 1945.[73] There's something approaching the truth too in a few 'confidential' medical articles on dystrophy."[74]

Even with the limited coverage of the tragedy of hunger in Leningrad and no information about the number of its victims, the visitors of the exhibition could see perhaps the most daunting evidence of the humanitarian crisis in the city, the diagram of the food allotments and information about blockade bread ingredients. The displays with non-edible products like oil meal or joiner's glue that were used for subsistence by starving people also added to the picture of the tragedy. Information about differences in food allotments for different categories of the city's citizens indirectly pointed to the officially accepted inequality in besieged Leningrad, in addition to the officially unspoken but well-known situation of the black market and well-fed store and cafeteria associates. The hierarchy of food allotments created significant inequality and resentment in the

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[71] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 466.

[72] Inber received the State Stalin Prize for her poem "Pulkovo Meridian" *(*first published in 1944).

[73] Likhachev most likely meant notes of the "main Leningrad pathologist" (also a lover of Anna Akhmatova and a prominent collector of coins) Vladimir Garshin who studied effects of dystrophy during the siege, see "V dni blokady," in *Zvezda*, No 7, 117-122.

[74] Dmitri Likhachev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2016), 209.

city. For example, Shaporina questioned the morality of the system in her June 18th, 1942 diary entry:

> Is there a political or a strategical need to sacrifice a multi-million person population [of Leningrad]? Maybe - yes, there is. But nevertheless, this is the only, the first case in world history of a year-long blockade and such [high] mortality. Of course, it is completely wrong, and criminal for a socialist state, that some segments of the population eat at the expense of others. Today in the cafeteria two women at my table, two dependents, were arguing: "If they gave us something to eat and a half a kilogram of bread, we too would go to work. I was a worker, I got sick, weak and could not work, I became a dependent, and then on a dependent [food allotment] card I can't get back on my feet.""[75]

The exhibition's visitor could see the visual evidence of the horrible truth – those who survived in besieged Leningrad, managed to do so at the expense of someone who did not.

***Women***

Even before the war, Leningrad experienced a shortage of men. In 1940, women made up around 47 percent of the industrial work force. The beginning of the war and subsequent military drafts called tens of thousands of women to industrial jobs in accordance with the propaganda slogan: "The Motherland is in Danger. Men to the Front. Women to the Factories!"[76] Additionally, during the first winter of the siege, the deaths of men far outnumbered the deaths of women (71–73 percent of starvation deaths in December and January were of males) even though there were more women than men in the civilian population of the city.[77] By December 1942, 79.9 percent of all factory workers were women.[78] The siege was often observed as a shared women's experience

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[75] Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 333.

[76] Women's labor at the home front was regularly marked in Soviet press and in the leaders' addresses, e.g. Stalin praised women's "selfless labor that inspired the soldiers of the Red Army" in his May 1st, 1944 Labor Day holiday order. Also see about Leningrad's women on the front page of *Leningradskaia pravda*, December 27, 1941, February 3, 1942. Of course, the opposite propaganda concept was used as well - women working at the rear were to do it in order to support the soldiers of the Red Army and thank them for their military successes.

[77] This is explained by several biological reasons, including stronger cardiovascular systems of women, their smaller size, and a greater percentage of body fat. Most men who stayed in the city were also older than 55. Elderly people and nursing infants were the first categories to die from starvation. Bidlack and Lomagin, 273-274. My maternal grandmother's grandfather Sergei Butusov, a worker at the Bolshevik factory, died in March 1942 at the age of 68.

[78] A. R. Dzeniskevich, *Voennaia piatiletka rabochikh Leningrada*, 102.

by the Leningraders who lived through it from the very beginning of the blockade.[79] Shaporina wrote about the women of Leningrad, comparing them to the women of the 1812 war who left Moscow to be ransacked by Napoleon's army:

> If the Moscow ladies (*baryni*), who left Moscow in 1812 leaving their homes for the looting and plundering, did the historically correct thing [referring to Leo Tolstoy's words in *War and Peace*], then perhaps our women (*baby*), housewives, hauling firewood, breaking ice, taking their dead to the morgue, planting vegetable gardens, cursing and snapping, but not leaving Leningrad, also acted historically correctly.
> To live in spite of everything.[80]

The role of women in Leningrad's life was praised in the demonstration of their work of cleaning up the city and restoring the housing and utility services in the spring months of 1942 after *Lengorispolkom* ordered compulsory labor to clean the city for all men aged fifteen to sixty years, and women from fifteen to fifty-five.[81] Popkov's quote accompanied the photographs of women at work: "An exceptional role in the life of Leningrad was played by the women of Leningrad... the hardest jobs of lumberjacks, loaders, foundry workers, concrete workers were successfully and selflessly performed by the women of Leningrad... Everywhere the female heroine was to the fore."[82] Women were also credited in the revival of Leningrad's industry in 1943. In the center of the industry hall was a large sculptural group called "Women in a Foundry." The sculptural composition had "special effects" – the figures of women were made out of white gypsum, while the metal pouring from the ladle was illuminated with neon red lights.[83]

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[79] See Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina, *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (Pittsburgh, Pa: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

[80] Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 396.

[81] The workers and employees of the temporarily conserved (non-functioning) factories and institutions were to work eight hours a day, workers and employees of functioning factories and institutions, two hours before or after work, housewives and students – six hours a day. The categories of people exempt from the conscription were the invalids, sick people with medical exemption documents, women in the last 35 days of pregnancy and in the first 28 days after giving birth, breastfeeding mothers, and mothers of children younger than eight without other family members who could stay with them. *Leningrad v Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭne Sovetskogo Soi͡uza*, vol. 1, 149-150.

[82] *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada*," 75-76.

[83] Lev L. Rakov, "Vystavka 'Oborona Leningrada'," in *Khudozhniki goroda*-fronta (Leningrad, 1973), 402.


Figure 2.14 Room of Leningrad industry in 1943. From the series of 1948 postcards. On the center of the photograph is "Women in a Foundry" by sculptors A A.. Strekavin and V.V. Isyaeva. On the background is a portrait of Joseph Stalin by V.A. Serov.

Women performing physically hard work in heavy industry or serving in MPVO became one of the most prominent topics for Leningrad's writers, journalists, artists and sculptors.[84] In the press, women, especially older ones, were often referred to as being "motherly fearless" in protecting the city. The survival of the city largely depended on the women who were able to

[84] E.g. see Kseniia Ardentova,"Vernost' priznaniiu," in *Podvig veka, Khudozhniki, skul'ntory arkhitektory, iskusstovovedy v gody Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny i blokady Leningrada*, ed. by Nina Nikolaevna Papernaia (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1969), 257-273. In his analysis of gender frameworks in the Soviet war memorials, David L. Hoffman argues that women figures in Soviet war memorials were presented in traditional feminine roles, and paradoxically suggests that "representing women as metalworkers did not involve a restructuring of gender roles, given that women had been recruited into metallurgy plants already during the 1930s." "Representations of gender in Soviet war memorials," in *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. by David L. Hoffmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 119-121. I believe that the paradoxal tendency to keep women grounded in their traditional feminine roles of wives and mothers and at the same time promote hard labor among them can be explained by a peculiar gender situation in the Stalinist Soviet Union that combined certain traditional views at gender roles based on the demographical needs of the state with economical requirements of rapid industrialization to include women in almost all labor sectors, which was exacerbated by the war that took men away from their jobs. When the women were called to the army, the same paradox led to the eventual exclusion of women who served in the war from the official culture of commemoration and even popular remembrance, since as David Hoffman noted, the society oftentimes viewed the women who served in the army with hostility suspecting loose sexual morals. See David L. Hoffman, "Representations of gender," 107-110.

preserve humanity in inhumane conditions in order to save themselves, their children, their families, and their city. Their labor was frequently praised by the city leaders, press, and art, which was well represented at the exhibition.

***1943: Breaking of the Blockade, the Revival of Industry, and the Soviet Offensive Campaigns***

The following section of the exhibition focuses on the events of 1943, called the year of the crucial turning-point in the war. Here, the exposition focused on three main themes: the events at the front, the revival of industry, and the increased shelling of the city and its resilience,.

Walking in to the first hall of the section, the visitor saw materials devoted to the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution, accompanied by Stalin's quotes on the subject of the front conditions in the fall of 1942 and his claim about the upcoming Soviet victories. This was illustrated by a scheme-map "The defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad" that signified the beginning of the new period of the war. The map was captioned with another Stalin quote: "Mass expulsion of the enemy from the Soviet country has begun."[85]

The hall "Breaking the blockade of Leningrad" narrated the events in Leningrad as one of the steps in the new period of the war – the Red Army's transition to the offensive. The Soviet military operation *Iskra* that connected the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts in January 1943 by establishing a land connection from the "mainland" to Leningrad, thus breaking the blockade, was presented in great detail in the exhibition. Maps, schemes, photographs, and paintings narrated the story of the successful Soviet campaign. The largest space was given to the main event that signified the breaking of the blockade – the meeting of the detachments of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts on January 18, 1943.

[85] Ibid., 79-80.

Figure 2.15 Breaking of the blockade. Artists V.A. Serov, I.A. Serebryany, A.A. Kazantsev. The painting created in the winter of 1943 was on display at the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. Courtesy of the Russian Museum

The industry that continued functioning in the besieged city was one of the central components of Leningrad's pride and heroism and became a focal point of the "front city" trope. From the outset of the war, Soviet press, local leaders, and then historiography had emphasized the importance of Leningrad's industry not only in supporting the needs of the city and its defending army, but also Leningrad's economical contribution into the general war effort, especially after breaking the siege.[86] In a similar manner, the exhibition described the achievements of industry: first, in developing new sources of energy desperately needed in the city, including new peat fields, woodcutting areas, and coal mines, as well as the revival of electric stations; and then narrating about types of products made in Leningrad during the war and, especially, after breaking the siege. As in the rest of the exhibition, the curators of the industry section used various media to impress its visitor: short films narrated about the production of

[86] E.g. *Leningradskaya Pravda*, December 21, 1942, p.1; A.A. Kuznetsov's speech at a large assembly of Leningrad organizations, *Leningrad v Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭne Sovetskogo Soi͡uza*, 248-257; P.S. Popkov's speech at the assembly of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR, in *Pravda*, March 3, 1944; N. A. Manakov. "Ėkonomika Leningrada v gody blokady," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 5 (1967): 15-31.

rubber articles used in weaponry and about the optical industry that resumed in Leningrad in 1943; photographs and models demonstrated the shipbuilding process; samples of the produced articles of civilian industry were on display next to the pyramids of shells and air bombs produced in Leningrad.

The first thing the visitor saw entering the first room of the industry hall was a large portrait of Stalin, who was acclaimed for his "genius leadership." However, the credit for the revival and expansion of Leningrad's industry was assigned directly to the *Lengorkom* under the leadership of Stalin's loyal associate (*soratnik*) comrade Zhdanov. A special place at the exposition was given to the Leningrad party organization showing its growth during the war.

German historian Jörg Ganzenmüller showed that much of the results that Leningrad factories and local government reported to Moscow were exaggerated, while the failures were masked and underreported.[87] Analyzing the share of Leningrad's weapon production in comparison to the all-Union numbers, the historian demonstrated the city's relatively low share, especially in comparison to pre-war numbers. Nonetheless, Ganzenmüller concluded that considering the exceptionally high growth of the Soviet industry during the war, Leningrad's results in the production of weapons "deserve all respect." [88]

The city's resilience at a time of increased shelling, discussed in the section above, was illustrated by the evidence of artistic and cultural life in besieged Leningrad. The exhibition guide proclaimed that "Leningrad is a city of high art and theater culture."[89] During the siege, members

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[87] Jörg Ganzenmüller, *Osaždennyj Leningrad:1941-1944; gorod v strategičeskich rasčetach agressorov i zaščitniko*v (Moscow, 2019), 264-265. See also the original German, *Das belagerte Leningrad: 1941-1944; die Stadt in den Strategien von Angreifern und Verteidigern* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schörningh, 2005).

[88] For example, Ganzenmüller calculated Leningrad's share in the all-Union production of airplanes in the first six months of 1941 as 3.25%, in 1942 0%, in 1943 – 0.40%; for the machine guns the share went from pre-war 11.80% to 2.40% in 1942 to 7.60% in 1943; for the artillery weapons the share went from pre-war 11.80% to 0.55% in 1942 to 7.60% in 1943. Ibid, 269-270.

[89] *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Lening*rada," 97.

of Leningrad's intellectual and artistic community demonstrated extraordinary devotion to their work. Additionally, their audiences maintained an interest in art and culture even while freezing and starving. Leningraders attended concerts, cinema, theater, and continued to read and even purchase books. Historian Sergey Iarov, in his monograph about the morality in the besieged city, argued that "the true significance of the arts, creativity and reading is that, during the siege, they offered Leningraders, immersed in the struggle for survival, stable moral support. They did not always prevent the collapse of morality, but retarded it."[90] Likhachev wrote about this phenomenon, noting that a person's brain died last: "People wrote diaries, philosophical essays, scientific works, thought sincerely, from the heart, showed extraordinary firmness, not yielding to pressure, not succumbing to vanity." [91] The exhibition showed some examples of creative work during the siege, albeit quite scarcely with the exception of the wartime art that was displayed throughout the exhibition. Pavel Luknitsky, for instance, was offended on behalf of literature: "It received no attention at the exhibition. Everything related to literature is represented by only about ten books, and nothing more - a pathetic shelf![92] On the "pathetic shelf" were books by authors Nikolai Tikhonov, Vissarion Sayanov, poets Vera Inber, Olga Berggolts, Vsevolod Azarov, and Vladimir Lifshits.

The final theme of the section devoted to 1943 were the events at the front between May and December. After a brief narration of the Red Army's biggest offensive campaigns at all fronts, the exhibition continued with the events at the Leningrad front. The topic of military training in the spring of 1943 was discussed, crediting the "genius of great Stalin" with single-handedly creating "innovative Soviet military science," including practical aspects of it – e.g. strategy and

[90] Sergey Iarov, *Leningrad 1941–42: Morality in a City under Siege* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA, USA: Polity Press, 2017), 266.
[91] Likhachev, *Vospominaniia,* 207-209.
[92] Luknit͡skiĭ, *Leningrad deĭstvuet*, 373.

military maneuvers, as well as theoretical – party-political work. Mikhail Kalinin's quote: "If someone wants to fight German invaders the most efficiently, [they] must carefully study comrade Stalin's speeches" captioned a display with Stalin's book *About the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People* (1943).[93]

The battle for the Sinyavino Heights (an area east of Leningrad) that began in July 1943 was represented by a map, drawings and paintings. The battle, usually called the Mga offensive in Soviet and Russian historiography, was extremely costly in human losses and achieved little of its intended goals, which were to destroy the enemy's defenses in the Mga salient area, including Sinyavino Heights, take control over the railroad and widen the corridor connecting Leningrad with the "mainland." The Soviet casualties between July 22 and August 22 amounted to 79,937 soldiers, of whom 20,890 men were considered dead or missing. [94] By August 22, the front line in the Mga salient was almost in the same place as a month prior. The Soviet attack resumed on September 15th with the smaller goal of seizing the Sinyavino Heights, which was achieved by September 18th. The narrative of the exhibition avoided the discourse of the unsuccessful Mga offensive by combining two operations into one by calling it a battle for Sinyavino Heights and emphasizing the September success without mention of Mga.

The commander of the Leningrad Front, Leonid Govorov (Marshal of the Soviet Union since 1944), was quoted in the section devoted to the Sinyavino Heights. In one of the featured quotes, Govorov said: "The enemy did not reckon with the casualties in order to hold the Sinyavino Heights in their hands. [The Germans] threw one division after another into the battle, saturating

[93] Ibid., 101.

[94] David M. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad 1941-1944*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 314. During the same period, the Wehrmacht units lost 26,166 men, of which 5,435 soldiers were dead or missing. Karl-Heinz Frieser, "Das Ausweichen der Heeresgruppe Nord von Leningrad ins Baltikum," in *Die Ostfront 1943/44 – Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt* (München, 2007), 282.

their defense with manpower to a degree which has not yet been seen in military history. And yet, we were able to capture the enemy's crucial foothold - Sinyavino."[95] Curiously enough, changing divisions every ten days of fighting was Govorov's own notorious tactic to ensure an uninterrupted attack and was called "Govorov's system" (*pourochnaya sistema Govorova*) among the divisions' commanders.[96] While the German forces were indeed exhausted by the Soviet offenses in July-September 1943, which effectively led to the abandonment of the Wehrmacht's plan to fully restore the blockade of Leningrad, the count of the German casualties was about four times lower than that of the Soviet army. In the words of historian David Glantz, Sinyavino had a reputation as a "graveyard for Red Army soldiers."[97]

The fallen soldiers were honored by a display in the middle of the room that contained photographs and documents of several individual defenders of Leningrad. Among the items were two medals of senior lieutenant Vladimir Nonin, brother of the tour guide Nina Nonina. The gold inscription on the display read: "Eternal glory to the heroes fallen in the battle for the city of Lenin."[98] The numbers of the Soviet casualties were not mentioned.

***The Victory at Leningrad***

The last section of the exhibition was the largest and the most impressive, as it told about the victory at Leningrad and the complete lifting of the blockade, and included five rooms. In the introductory room of the section, a visitor saw paintings of the victory fireworks on the day when the blockade was lifted – January 27, 1944. On another wall there were texts of the official orders proclaiming the lifting of the siege issued by Joseph Stalin and the commander of the Leningrad

[95] Ibid., 102.
[96] B.V. Bychevskiĭ, *Gorod-front*. (Leningrad, 1967), 289.
[97] Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad*, 314.
[98] *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Lening*rada," 104.

Front, Leonid Govorov. Between the texts of the orders were the photographic portraits of Leonid Govorov, and members of the Leningrad Military Council Alexei Zhdanov, Alexey A. Kuznetsov, and Nikolai V. Solovyov.[99]

Figure 2.16 Display with the portraits of Govorov, Zhdanov, Kuznetsov, and Solovyov. Date unknown.

The next hall was called "The great victory at Leningrad" and was the culmination of the exhibition. Standing in the center was a massive statue of Stalin made by sculptor V.Ya. Bogolyubov. Behind the statue was a large diorama showing the moment of the breakthrough of the German fortifications south of Pulkovo on January 15, 1944 by artists Kazantsev, Serov, and Tsepalin. The walls of the hall were covered by large panels made of the bright red fabric. The dome was illuminated with thousands of lightbulbs, creating a triumphal effect of the upcoming victory.

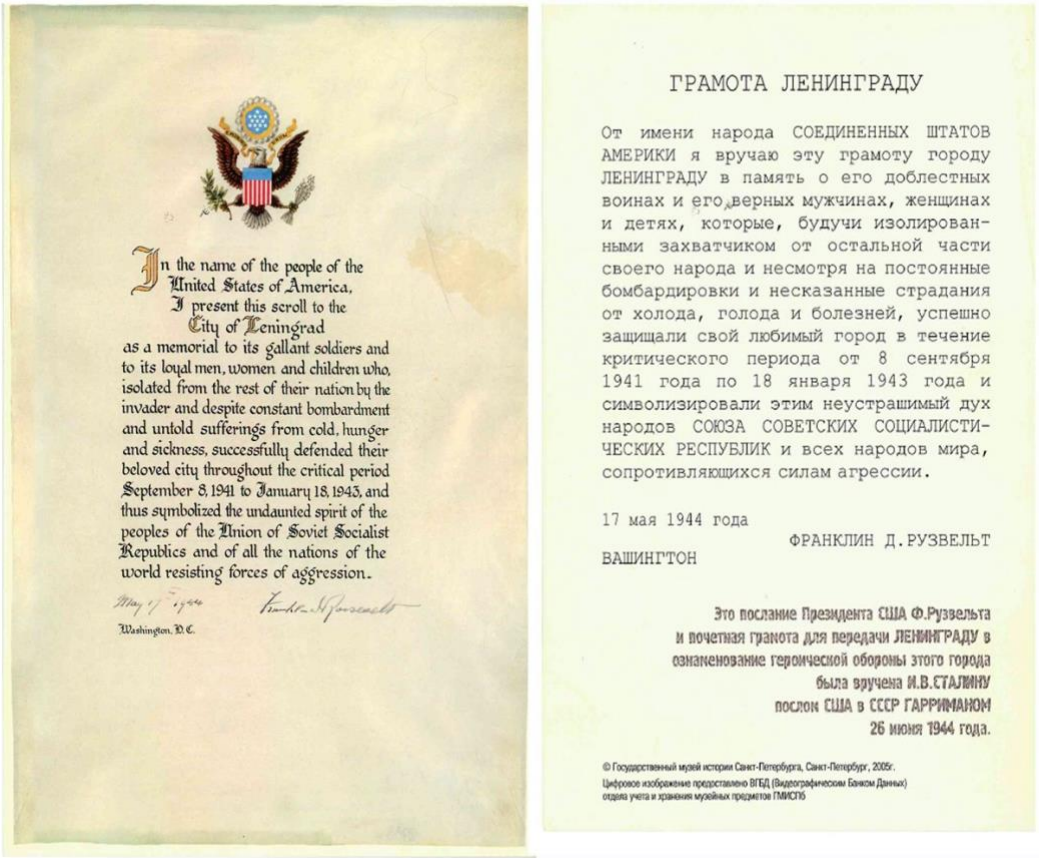
[99] Nikolai V. Solovyov (1903-1950) - during a war was a chairman of the *Lenoblispolkom*. Solovyov was the first secretary of the Communist party in Crimea since July 1946. During the Leningrad Affair he was purged and executed in 1949.


Figure 2.17 The Victory Hall at the Exhibition of the Heroic Defense of Leningrad. Before 1946.

The map at the entrance of the hall showed the direction of the Soviet troops at the Leningrad Front during the decisive operation of the Red Army that started on January 14, 1944. Large stands on both sides of the hall leading to Stalin's statue were devoted to the liberated towns of Leningrad oblast' - Ropsha, Krasnoe Selo, Peterhof, Pushkin, Pavlovsk, Gatchina, Luga, Kingisepp, and Veliky Novgorod.[100] On each stand there were materials that reflected the battles and photographs of the destruction in each town. Pavel Luknitsky, who thought that the photos of the suburbs inadequately represented the actual horrific destruction, enjoyed the most impressive part of the hall: the actual weapons and equipment used by the heroes of the Red Army at the Leningrad Front and a "well-made realistic panorama depicting the front line."[101]

[100] Veliky Novgorod was administratively a part of Leningrad Oblast' between August 1927 and July 1944.
[101] Luknit͡skiĭ, *Leningrad deĭstvuet*, 373-374.

Luknitsky, who visited the exhibition on April 30, would not see the exhibit that was placed on display in the middle of the hall a few months after the grand opening– a scroll sent by President Roosevelt to Leningrad to commemorate the city's blockade experience.[102]



In the name of the people of the United States of America, I present this scroll to the City of Leningrad as a memorial to its gallant soldiers and to its loyal men, women and children who, isolated from the rest of their nation by the invader and despite constant bombardment and untold sufferings from cold, hunger and sickness, successfully defended their beloved city throughout the critical period September 8, 1941 to January 18, 1943, and thus symbolized the undaunted spirit of the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and of all the nations of the world resisting forces of aggression.

May 7, 1944 Franklin D. Roosevelt

Washington, D.C.

ГРАМОТА ЛЕНИНГРАДУ

От имени народа СОЕДИНЕННЫХ ШТАТОВ АМЕРИКИ я вручаю эту грамоту городу ЛЕНИНГРАДУ в память о его доблестных воинах и его верных мужчинах, женщинах и детях, которые, будучи изолированными захватчиком от остальной части своего народа и несмотря на постоянные бомбардировки и несказанные страдания от холода, голода и болезней, успешно защищали свой любимый город в течение критического периода от 8 сентября 1941 года по 18 января 1943 года и символизировали этим неустрашимый дух народов СОЮЗА СОВЕТСКИХ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК и всех народов мира, сопротивляющихся силам агрессии.

17 мая 1944 года

ФРАНКЛИН Д.РУЗВЕЛЬТ

ВАШИНГТОН

Это послание Президента США Ф.Рузвельта и почетная грамота для передачи ЛЕНИНГРАДУ в ознаменование героической обороны этого города была вручена И.В.СТАЛИНУ послом США в СССР ГАРРИМАНОМ 26 июня 1944 года.



Figure 2.18 The scroll to the City of Leningrad from Franklin D. Roosevelt. This was on display at the Exhibition of the Defense of Leningrad. Museum of the History of Saint-Peterburg

The next hall of the exhibition also had a grandiose atmosphere but told the opposite stories - of the defeated. The Trophy Hall displayed all the main types of tanks and weapons that were used by the German army at Leningrad - "tigers," "panthers," various guns, mortars, and cannons. In the center of the hall there was a barrel of a heavy 240-mm German gun, used to shell Leningrad. Using common zoomorphic metaphors, the guide described it as "the captured monster is frozen

[102] The American ambassador W. Averell Harriman presented the Leningrad and Stalingrad scrolls to Stalin on June 26, 1944.

in the exhibition hall testifying to the powerlessness of the enemy."[103] Another impressive display was an eight-meter tall pyramid of 520 helmets (white and green) of the German soldiers that echoed Vasily Vereshchagin's painting *The Apotheosis of War*.[104] On the wall behind the pyramid were the numbers of German losses at Leningrad, both human and weapons.

Figure 2.19 The pyramid of the Wehrmacht soldiers' helmets at the Trophy Hall. 1944. The New York Times

Above all of the defeated enemy's weapons, "flying" in the high ceiling, was the fighter plane of the Hero of the USSR Mikhail Plotkin, the Jewish ace, who bombed Berlin in August 1941.

[103] *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Lening*rada," 112.
[104] The idea of the pyramid belonged to the architect Vasily Petrov.

Figure 2.20 The Trophy Hall. Likely 1944.

The last of three grand halls of the exhibition was devoted to the Baltic Fleet. The hall featured torpedo boats that fought in the Baltic following "Suvorov's behest: beat the enemy not with numbers, but with skill," and two bomber-planes, La-5 and Yak-7, used by the heroes-pilots of the Baltic Fleet.[105]

The final room that represented the engineering troops featured two large dioramas, models of the fortifications and other structures, and another large portrait of Stalin and the order of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR that awarded Stalin with his second Order of Victory, the highest military decoration awarded for service in World War II in the Soviet Union.[106]

[105] Ibid., 122-123.

[106] Joseph Stalin, as a commander-in-chief, and a Marshal of Soviet Union, was awarded his first Order of Victory in July 1944 for "the liberation of right-bank Ukraine," and the second one in June 1945 for "the victory over Germany."

***Conclusion***

The war exhibitions were one of the primary instruments of Soviet propaganda, and the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" served the same role narrating the siege from the side of Leningrad's leadership and Stalinist ideology. Every section, room, and display of the exhibition was captioned by the relevant quotes of Stalin, Zhdanov, Popkov, and other officials at both the central and local levels. The narrative focused more on the city's military defense rather than the experiences of the people inside the ring. The exhibition showed the effects of shelling and bombing on the city and its suburbs, but the effects of hunger were presented in a subdued manner. At the time of its opening, the section "Leningrad in the period of the hungry blockade" had slightly fewer items (516 exhibits) on display than "Battle on the distant approaches to Leningrad" (557) and significantly fewer than "Partisan warfare in the Leningrad oblast" (864).[107] Still, the exhibition displayed the vital information about the catastrophically low and unequal food allotments.

Despite the shortcomings caused by the universal ideological censorship of culture and history and the overwhelming internalized prevalence of the city-hero discourse, "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" was able to demonstrate the genocidal nature of hunger in besieged Leningrad as well as the absence of running water and electric power. The daily norms of bread allotments during the winter of 1941-1942 were on display along with the photographs that showed emaciated people. The ordinary people of the city, the survivors of the siege, contributed a large amount of personal artifacts and documents to the museum, including notes and diaries written during the siege.

[107] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 24, op. 2v, d. 6794, ll. 4-5.

Lisa Kirschenbaum argued that the exhibition "adopted the practice of juxtaposing the artifacts of battle and of everyday life as a means of writing the tragic tale of the city into the grand narrative of Soviet military victory."[108] Notwithstanding the indisputably political and ideological nature of the narrative of the exhibition, I believe that the displays of hunger testify to the limits to the totalitarian control in the Stalinist Soviet Union. The state actors, at both the central and local levels, would much rather not mention the extreme nature of hunger in the besieged city, but could not realistically place a taboo on the subject.

The exhibition became popular among the Leningraders who saw it as evidence and validation of their unprecedented suffering. As the historians of the siege Richard Bidlack and Nikita Lomagin have argued, "no other city in history experienced the phenomenon of total war to the extent that Leningrad's *blokadniki* did."[109] Perhaps touring the museum even served as a therapeutic experience for some survivors, as they were able to relive and rethink their shared traumatic memories with the assistance of the artistic medium, "transforming complex mnemic images into simplified eidetic icons."[110] Pavel Luknitsky noticed this effect from visiting the exhibition while noticing the romanticization of the siege by the artists:

> A strange, pleasant feeling possessed me: everything that yesterday was our everyday life (*byt*), routine and familiar, - today, having gone into history, already appears before us in the form of exhibits telling about the past. I clearly felt that we, Leningraders, already live in a different era.
> Of course, many things, especially paintings by artists, panels, panoramas, romanticizing this recent past, present it to us in some other tonality, not as simple and everyday as it was in reality. But it is not because the artists tried to embellish it all; the reason is different: the actual reality is always infinitely richer, more diverse, deeper and more exciting than the generally too hasty attempts of some artists to portray it.[111]

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[108] Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy*, *95.*

[109] Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 184.

[110] Patrick Hutton, *The Memory Phenomenon in Contemporary Historical Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 21.

[111] Luknit͡skiĭ, *Leningrad deĭstvuet*, 373.

When the evacuees started to return to Leningrad as well as new migrants from the "mainland," a certain level of hostility rose between *those who stayed* and the newcomers. The latter were perceived by the former as lazy opportunists who were slacking at their jobs and came to Leningrad for an easy life. An official in the Leningrad party's Department of Propaganda and Agitation reported that a worker at one of the Leningrad factories alleged that a group of *blokadniki* disgruntled with the newcomers' lack of work ethic, planned to take them to the exhibition – "then they will have a different attitude to the assigned work."[112] This concept of using commemoration of the war and the blockade was used by Leningrad's leaders and propaganda officials to encourage labor mobilization for restoration of the city and its industry. The Museum played a big part in it. In Steven Maddox's words, "as an educational tool, [the museum] attempted to inculcate the history of the city in people, encouraging them to make sacrifices and restore their "hometown" (*rodnoi gorod*)."[113]

Like the trophy exhibition in Moscow, the exhibition in Leningrad became a sight that was shown to all visitors to the city. Dwight Eisenhower, Clementine Churchill, and many allied generals and ambassadors visited the exhibition during their trips to Leningrad. Churchill, who visited USSR on the business of the Red Cross "Aid to Russia" Fund which she chaired, wrote about her visit to the exhibition detailing the presented statistics and emphasizing the heroism of the Leningraders:

> The long ordeal of Leningrad was vividly presented in an exhibition, "The Defence of Leningrad," which was attracting much attention while I was there. The exhibition dramatically reconstructed the life of the people during the blockade. At the worst period the food allowance for each working period per day was 125 grams of bread (a little more than a quarter of a pound). During the blockade, 4,638 high explosive bombs, 102,520 incendiaries and 148,478 shells fell in the city. At the exhibition I saw car passes prepared by the Germans in readiness for their occupation of the city. How confident they were of

[112] TsGAIPD SPb, f.25, op.10, d. 434, l. 47.
[113] Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 157.

> subjugating it! The exhibition abounded in evidence of the heroism of Leningrad's defenders during that time of terror. And, also, of their tenacity and tireless skill in improvisation and contrivance, shown by the way in which supplies were brought in across Lake Ladoga. Their life-line was never cut.[114]

In comparison to other war-themed exhibitions and museums opened in a similar time period in other cities of the Union, including Kyiv and Minsk, the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" followed similar narratives when covering common topics, such as "Treacherous attack of the Nazi Germany" or "German atrocities in the occupied areas." However, the exhibition in Leningrad was unique in many other aspects. First, it was much more detailed in narrating the particular military events and covering the activities of separate branches of the armed forces, such as the navy and the engineering troops. Second, while honoring the central government and personally Stalin, the Leningrad exhibition particularly focused on local patriotism and successes, whether real or perceived, of local leadership. The exhibition was also unique in its design, because its indoor space combined artistic displays conveying the war narrative and an abundant amount of large weaponry (tanks, large cannons, planes, boats, etc.) that were typically reserved for the outside cityscape only.

The exhibition was valued and supported by the local party officials, who viewed it important for their image of the victors who defended the city of Lenin. Their patronage combined with the extraordinary efforts of its staff members, allowed it to expand. On January 27, 1946 the newly reorganized Museum of the Defense of Leningrad opened to the public. The next chapter investigates the expansion and reorganization of the exhibition into a large museum and the museum's history until its dissolution in 1953, investigating the impact of these tragic events on the scholarship and remembrance of the siege.

[114] Clementine Churchill, *My Visit to Russia* (London: Hutchinson, 1945), 18-19.

## Chapter III. Museum of the Defense of Leningrad: from Grandiose Plans to the Tragic Closure

> It is said that victors are not judged, that they must not be criticized, that they must not be enquired into. This is not true. Victors may and should be judged, they may and should be criticized and enquired into. This is beneficial not only for the cause, but also for the victors; there will be less swelled-headedness, and there will be more modesty.
>
> Joseph Stalin (1946)

> And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
> Mat 24:2

### *Introduction*

The victorious end of the war did not bring about the beginning of a prosperous and calm life for the people of USSR in general and Leningraders in particular. The post-war experiences of Leningrad's citizens were characterized by a severe shortage of food and other basic goods, poor living conditions, rising crime, and general societal instability. This was intensified by the fragmentation of society as evacuees, political exiles, and war participants struggled to return to the city while *blokadniki* were rebuilding their life after the horrors of war.[1] At the same time, the city was flooded with migrants from other regions of the Union as the city leaders aimed to repopulate and rebuild Leningrad, which created tensions between the "old" Leningraders and the newcomers. Another group of marginalized outsiders that were prominent in the city in the immediate post-war years were German prisoners of war, who were often deployed for construction work.

[1] See Lebedeva and Cherepenina, *Ot voĭny k miru;* Abram Z. Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyĭ: 1945-1982 gody* (Saint-Petersburg: Ostrov, 2005).

Not only was everyday life in the "Hero City"[2] incredibly difficult, but political circumstances were increasingly grim as well. The post-war expectations of the exhausted Soviet people on the betterment of life and liberalization of the regime were futile; a new "rampage of the societal evilness" had begun.[3] As Nina Tumarkin noted, the last eight years of Stalin's life and rule turned out to be among the most horrific of his era, as they were filled with "brutal, hate-filled campaigns," including the Leningrad Affair, Andrei Zhdanov's ideological purge against everything "foreign and anti-patriotic" that targeted Soviet intelligentsia, and the anti-Semitic campaign against "cosmopolitanism."[4] The city that had just withstood the most brutal siege in history had to halt its claims for exceptionalism shortly thereafter. The blockade museum was shut down in 1949, the efforts of local historians to document the siege were crushed; Leningrad's party leadership, once praised for its war-time actions, was purged.

The first part of this chapter explores the transformation of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" into the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. Despite the ideological efforts of the central government that aimed to reduce the local and private narratives in favor of all-Union patriotism, the updated museum still celebrated the particularity of Leningrad's victory focusing on local heroism and the events on the Leningrad front.

Contextualizing a museum in its time and place is crucial for an appropriate critical assessment of its exposition and the work of its curators. "Any effort to understand museum presentations of the past," write historians Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig in their editorial study of the American history museums, "must consider the constraints under which they operate," including "institutional and political concerns," such as being cautious of material that might

[2] Leningrad was one of four original Hero Cities awarded on May 1, 1945 along with Stalingrad, Sevastopol, and Odessa.
[3] Lidiia Ginzburg, *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom* (Leningrad, 1989), 582.
[4] Tumarkin *The Living And the Dead*, 102.

offend a community in which a museum is located.[5] I propose to afford the same consideration while analyzing the Museum of the Defense, which is described by some contemporary scholars as offering "a sanitized representation of the blockade"[6] or not sufficiently representing "the suffering of non-combatants."[7]

The second part of the chapter focuses on the closure of the museum in 1949 and its complete destruction by 1953, engaging in the historiographical debate about the impact of the Leningrad Affair and closure of the museum on the memorialization and scholarship of the blockade. Lisa Kirschenbaum argues that the closure of the Museum, which was the most important memorial of the siege, underscores "the degree to which the Leningrad Affair aimed […] to erase the memory and the myth of the blockade."[8] Polina Barskova emphasizes that the Leningrad Affair disrupted the "responsible scholarship" of the siege, since "after a wave of severe purges, museums and archives dedicated to collecting siege materials were shut down."[9] Historian Alexis Peri argues that "The Leningrad Affair silenced the local, insular, particularistic myth of the blockade and erased many siege stories from public view."[10]

In contrast, David Brandenberger proposes that one should not overestimate the significance of the liquidation of the museum and its consequences, since there was no "union-wide taboo to talk about the blockade," "wide campaign against Leningrad's war experience," or "attempts to wipe out the memories of sufferings and emotional experiences of the siege."[11]

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[5] Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, *History Museums in the United States: a Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), xix.
[6] Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 153.
[7] Kelly, "'The Leningrad Affair'," 108.
[8] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy*, 146.
[9] Polina Barskova, Introduction to "Siege of Leningrad Revisited: Narrative, Image, Self," *Slavic Review* 69, 2 (Summer, 2010), 277.
[10] Peri, *The War Within*, 251.
[11] Brandenberger, "Repressed Memory," 182.

Catriona Kelly suggests that the closure of the Museum of the Blockade was "not so much a suppression of Leningrad's local history as a re-orchestration of it in the key of Soviet triumphalism, arguing that "[t]he airbrushing of war memory was not peculiar to Leningrad either." [12] Kelly also disputes Barskova's argument that historical study of the siege was interrupted, claiming that were no "museums and archives dedicated to collecting siege materials," except for the Museum of the Defense, which only had one room dedicated to the fate of civilians.[13]

This chapter demonstrates that the closure of the museum and other ideology-rooted terror campaigns affected the commemoration and study of the blockade for decades to come. I argue against underestimating the impact of the museum's closure and dismissing of its role in representing the experiences of civilians. The Museum of the Defense of Leningrad was not just a place that displayed the artifacts of the siege but was also a dedicated research center that collected historical sources and evidence related to the experiences of the city's population and its defenders.[14] The claim that it was the only place to collect evidence of the siege is erroneous, as several other institutions, most notably the State Public Library and the Leningrad Institute of History of the All-Union Communist Party (*Istpart*), took part in the collection of siege materials. The destruction of the museum, along with "cleansings" in other city institutions that studied the siege, led to the lacunae in historiography and a loss of many documentary and material sources. While the war memory was certainly "airbrushed" in other regions and other war museums were also closed in the same time period, the case of the museum in Leningrad was peculiar due to

[12] Kelly, "The 'Leningrad Affair'." 109-110.
[13] Ibid., 108.
[14] Barskova calls its creation "an attempt to realize the dream of creating an archival vessel that would preserve the memory of the Siege—as a space and as a text." *Besieged Leningrad*, 18.

especially brutal manner of its closure and the criminal prosecution and other punitive repercussions for its workers.

Additionally, I propose to expand the scope of perspective on the terror in Leningrad when investigating its impact on culture and society, including memorialization and historical scholarship of the siege. The Leningraders considered and experienced the Leningrad Affair not as a separate case, but rather as a part of the big wave of terror and ideological campaigns that characterized late Stalinism and began in Leningrad as early as August 1946, when the TsK's decree attacked *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* journals.[15] The campaigns that aimed to take ideological control over the minds of the population and cleanse the cultural and scientific institutions from "ideologically foreign elements" had further complicated the work of the historians. The first comprehensive history of the siege was written by an American, Harrison Salisbury, in 1969 not because local historians had no interest in such study, but because of the strict control imposed on the scholarship in the first post-war years.

***Reconstructed Museum of the Defense of Leningrad***

From the earliest days of Leningrad's siege, the city's ordinary people and leaders alike shared a common desire to record and commemorate its events, which had arisen from the feeling of being at the front of history and living through unique experiences. The museum's organizers who aimed to record, preserve, and display the war and the blockade created a museum-memorial that was not only a propaganda effort, but also allowed for a sincere relationship with the Leningraders and their experiences of the war. Of course, for the apparatchiks of the city party committee and the military council of the Leningrad front who tightly controlled the creation of

[15] Pyzhikov and Danilov argue that the *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* decree was the first manifestation of the Beria-Malenkov tandem's attack at what they call "the Leningrad party group." A.V. Pyzhikov and A. A. Danilov, *Rozhdenie sverkhderzhavy, 1945–1953 gody* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), 224-225.

the exposition, the museum was also an ideologically appropriate way to narrate their version of the events. Additionally, as Steven Maddox correctly observed, the museum was used as an educational and propaganda tool as a part of the city's leadership's larger effort to mobilize the population for the task of post-war restoration of Leningrad.[16]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the city leadership intended for the exhibition to be a permanent center of the study of the blockade and defense of Leningrad since they recognized its potential as an educational and research institution. In July 1944, A.A. Kuznetsov wrote to the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers (*Sovnarkom*) of the Soviet Union Vyacheslav Molotov with the request to reorganize the exhibition into a museum of the "republican stature" in order to staff it with more cadres.[17]

The plan for the expansion of the exhibition that Lev Rakov submitted in 1944 to the city's leadership showed that the exhibition was meant to become a large center of scholarship of Leningrad's defense. The reorganization of the exhibition into a museum was necessary in order to receive better funding, not only for its staff, but also for the reconstruction of the building as well as the expansion of the exhibition. The exhibition aimed to incorporate more of the Salt Town buildings, adding new halls to its exposition and to repair and update current displays and art. Additionally, Rakov suggested to create an historical reserve on the battle sites of the Pulkovo Heights, to include the city's barricades and fortifications and newly built memorials as exhibition items, to create a mobile exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" for the cities and districts of the Leningrad oblast', and to use the territories of the adjacent streets to expand the demonstration

[16] Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 157.
[17] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 10, d. 468, l. 62.

of the trophy weapons.[18] The latter project was personally supported by the head of the Political Directorate of the Leningrad Front D.I. Kholostov.[19]

While these plans were on par with the natural militarism of the war period and tendencies in the war commemoration in 1944-45 as demonstrated in the first chapter on the examples of Moscow, Kyiv, and Minsk, the scale of commemoration and preservation of the defense structures was arguably impossible in the city that needed to be reconstructed after three years of shelling and bombing.[20] Evidently, Rakov's personal interest in military history, explored in the next chapter of this dissertation, reflected in his suggestions to create the grandiose military memorial throughout the city. Rakov was not alone in his ideas to expand the scope of the war commemoration in the city. For example, Vsevolod Vishnevsky, an influential Soviet author and war correspondent, wrote a 1947 letter to Vladimir Bogatkin, the Deputy Commander in Chief for Political Affairs at the Leningrad Military District, with suggestions to expand the scope of the museum which he envisioned to be a center of patriotic education in the USSR. Bogatkin criticized the existing museum for not expanding enough and enthusiastically suggested that the Leningrad Military District should work with the museum to create a "mass patriotic movement" based on the heroic events of the recent war.[21] These plans and ideas proved unrealistic for the time being, as the central government's ideological priorities began to shift away from the militaristic rhetoric of the fight with fascism towards the existential battle with Western imperialism.

In the meantime, the exhibition that opened during the war functioned in dire conditions. In the fall of 1944 it only had one-third of the firewood that it needed for heating, which caused

[18] TsGALI SPb, f. 277, op.1, d.110, ll. 45-57.
[19] TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 18., d. 1680, l. 229.
[20] The official slogan of Leningrad's reconstruction was "to make Leningrad more beautiful and majestic." See report of Leningrad's main architect N.V. Baranov on the plan of the city's reconstruction. TsGA SPb. f. 7384, op. 17, d. 1393a, ll. 1, 1a, 9-10.
[21] Vsevolod Vishnevsky, *Sobranie sochineniĭ*, vol. VI. (Moscow, 1961), 634-636.

the absence of visitors and damage to the displayed items. The roof had been damaged by shells and was leaking, and the exhibition's assistant director Rakov did not have a typewriter as it was taken away by a thrifty bureaucrat.[22] In the exhibition's work plan for 1945, Rakov described construction projects required for the exhibition's development on the 9,000 square meters of its property: "to repair roofs, facades; to finish building and furnishing the coatrooms for the visitors, ticket windows, waiting rooms, canteen, kitchen, bathrooms, workshops, etc.; to glaze the window frames, as most of them are currently covered by plywood and the exhibition has to use artificial lighting; to completely reconstruct the heating system […]; to repair the residential outbuilding in the courthouse in order to organize in it a dormitory for the junior service staff, to equip electrical lighting of streets and courthouses […], to install signs on the streets adjacent to the exhibition […]."[23] Rakov also emphasized the need for creating workshops for the exhibition, to install a fire alarm and phone cable between the rooms, and to furnish the exhibition. He asked for 1,825,000 rubles in order to complete these construction projects in addition to the 725,000 rubles that he requested for the projects directly related to the content of the exposition. The completion of these construction projects became possible only in 1945, when the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR issued a decision to reorganize the exhibition into a museum on October 5. *Sovnarkom* of the Soviet Union then gave it the status of a republican museum of the second category.[24] The museum was then closed for reconstruction and was reopened on January 27, 1946, on the second anniversary of the lifting of the blockade. The fast completion of the construction projects in the

[22] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 10, d. 468, ll. 64-65.

[23] NA GMI SPb, f. "Muzeĭ Oborony Leningrada," op. 1, d. 5, ll. 6-12. Cited in Biuanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 158.

[24] The Russian Museum in Saint-Petersburg and museums of the Revolution in Moscow and Leningrad were republican museums of the first category, while the State Museum of the Palekh Art in Ivanovo Oblast and Moscow Darwin Museum were of the second category. The belonging of a museum to one of the three categories defined its funding, including salaries of a museum's management and staff members. GARF, f. R-5446, Op. 1, d. 214, ll 287–291.

museum was possible partially due to the labor of the thirty-seven German prisoners of war, who were sent by the city's military council to work on the reconstruction of the museum.[25] The financing of the museum was also a high priority for the city's government. For example, in the second quarter of 1946, Leningrad's *ispolkom* planned to spend 800,000 rubles on reconstruction of all suburban palaces and gardens, including Peterhof, which was laying in ruins, and 600,000 rubles on construction projects for the Museum of the Defense.[26]

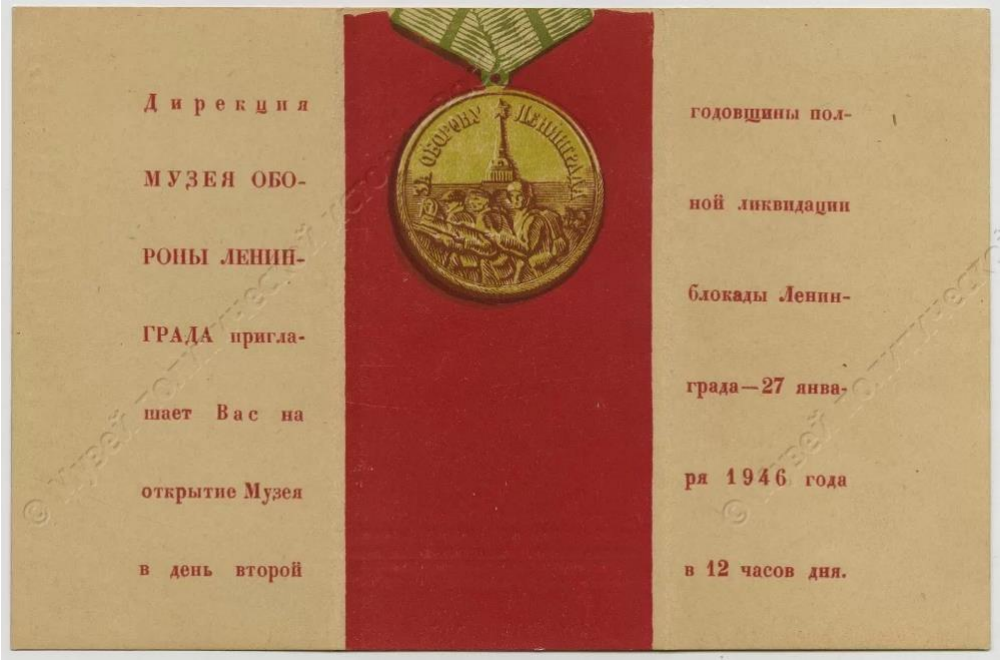


Figure 3.1 Invitation to the opening of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. Courtesy of the Museum of Political History of Russia

On January 27, 1946 the city celebrated the second anniversary of the complete lifting of the blockade with fireworks and various cultural and celebratory events that took place not only on the 27 but began in the weeks leading to the anniversary.[27] A big part of the celebrations was

[25] Biuanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 85. The buildings of the Jewish Museum in Vilnius were also repaired by a brigade of German prisoners of war, "in an exquisite case of poetic justice." David E. Fishman, *The Book Smugglers*, e-book, 412.

[26] TsGALI SPb, f. 277, op.1, d.135, l. 12.

[27] Steven Maddox argues that the celebrations that were "carefully scripted by the local party and Soviet leadership" had the goal of molding "the city's residents into ideal Leningraders based on the mythologized image of the heroic and selfless *blokadniki*." *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 164.

the grand opening of the reconstructed Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. The updated museum had three large new sections - artillery, aviation, and MPVO (local antiaircraft defense), as well as an updated exposition of the partisan section. The new sections and halls focused on the local events in the city and at the Leningrad front.

The hall that represented MPVO offered an interactive effect by the use of decorative "windows to the siege." Through these "windows," a visitor could see the paintings and murals in the niches of the walls. A real tram that was directly hit and destroyed by a German shell on December 22, 1943 killing most of the passengers was also bearing witness in the MPVO hall of the museum. Next to it was a display with the belongings of the killed passengers, including food allotment cards, covered with blood, pieces of clothing, shell-splinter, and even remnants of a human skull.[28] The tram left a particularly strong impression on the museum's visitors.[29]

The section of artillery occupied two halls. The first one was devoted to the counter-defense of the Soviet artillery against the Germans in the "period of defense," including schemes of the defense line, photographs of fortifications, a painting that depicted the labors of the Leningrad industry workers who were building new artillery systems during the siege, and a mural that showed artillery actions on the Nevsky Pyatachok battle site. The hall also displayed an original copy of the plan of Leningrad that the Wehrmacht used to shell the city. The plan showed markings of the artillery goals on the buildings of "educational institutions, cultural organizations, hospitals, etc."[30] While planning the artillery section, Rakov argued that the Leningraders would be especially interested in the materials on the battle against the "enemy's artillery that barbarically

[28] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 174.
[29] Sobolev, *Leningrad v bor'be za vyzhivanie*, 30.
[30] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 180.

shelled our city."[31] The other artillery hall featured a large sculptural mural with the bust of Stalin in the middle and Stalin's quote: "Artillery is the god of war." Other displays were devoted to the work of the Soviet artillery in the period of the lifting of the siege in January 1944 as well as the military operations against the Finns in spring-summer 1944.

In the three rooms of the aviation section a visitor saw models and schemes, maps and art devoted to aviation at the Leningrad front. The exposition narrated that in the beginning of the war, Soviet aviation lacked in quantity of planes but exceled in the quality of the equipment and human forces; by the end of the war, "Stalin's falcons" were excelling in both quality and quantity. A special electrified scheme depicted the air battles on the Karelian Isthmus during the Soviet offensive against the Finns in June 1944. A series of photographs demonstrated other scenes of the Finnish defeat.[32] A visitor could then go up to the cabin of a real cargo aircraft Li-2 and look down on a panorama of the Karelian Isthmus during the night-time air raid by the Soviet forces. The last room of the aviation section was devoted to the pilots of the Leningrad front who were awarded the titles of the Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Arguably the most important update from a political point of view was made to the grand Victory Hall. On the day of the museum's opening, Lev Rakov described the newly reconstructed hall to a TASS correspondent:

> In the center of the room is a giant sculpture of Generalissimo Stalin. Next to it – two reliefs in color: Victory fireworks in Moscow and the Victory flag over Berlin. In the hall there are busts of the members of the Politburo of the TsK VKP(b) and the Marshals of the Soviet Union, portraits of the members of the Military Council of the Leningrad Front and commanders of the Leningrad Front detachments. Six large panoramas depict the defeat of the Germans in approaches to Leningrad, on the Karelian Isthmus and in the Baltics. A large panel 30 x 10 square meters depicts the capitulation of the Courland German army group.[33]

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[31] *Leningradskaya Pravda*, April 30, 1945, 3.

[32] About the Karelian Isthmus operation see Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad 1941-1944*, 427-459.

[33] TSGALI SPb, f. 12, op. 2, d. 53, ll. 9-11. Cited in Biuanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 86-87.

Originally, the portrait gallery depicted the military leaders of Leningrad's defense in addition to the main Party and military leaders of the Union. According to the museum's tour guide and memoirist Nina Nonina, Lev Rakov envisioned the portrait gallery to be a symbolic continuation of the military gallery in the Hermitage Museum, which displays 332 portraits of generals who took part in the Patriotic War of 1812.[34] While the individuals who received large portraits included Leningrad party leaders Andrei Zhdanov and Alexei Kuznetsov, they were there in their wartime capacities as members of the Military Council of the Leningrad Front. Both Zhdanov and Kuznetsov received general ranks during the war.

However, during the obligatory inspection of the museum before its opening for the public, *Lengorkom* secretary Yakov Kapustin directed that the Victory Hall was to display the portraits of the civilian leaders of the city in addition to the military commanders. Among these new portraits, two were large and depicted Popkov and Kapustin himself.[35] Sixteen other portraits were smaller and included various leaders of the Leningrad party and Soviet organizations. Additionally, Kapustin requested to add photographs of the leaders of party, Soviet, and industrial organizations to the hall devoted to the wartime industry. All personalities who were honored by the individual portraits were chosen by the *Lengorkom*.

In comparison with other war museum of the time, the portrait gallery of the local military commanders was peculiar. Kapustin's directive to add the portraits of the civilian leaders made it extraordinary. In contrast, the Victory Hall of the Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad displayed a porcelain bust of Stalin (crafted in Leningrad) with various banners on both sides.

[34] Nonina, ibid., 80.
[35] TSGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 48, d. 247, l. 17. Cited in Biuanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 184-185.

Other items displayed in the hall were the gifts and letters sent to Stalingrad from different countries, including a commemorative scroll sent by President Roosevelt. Besides Stalin, no other individual Soviet military or civilian personalities were featured in the hall.[36] On the other hand, the Victory Hall at the Kyivan exhibition did display portraits of the Soviet generals along the large sculpture of "the genius leader" Stalin, but the featured generals were the Marshalls of the Soviet Union, including Vasilevsky, Zhukov, and Rokossovsky and others, who led "the Red Army, army-liberator who, after expelling the occupants from our country helped the peoples of Europe to throw off the yoke of Fascist slavery."[37] The local heroes - prominent partisans were honored by a chart of Ukrainian partisans awarded with the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union and a painting that depicted the reception of the partisan commanders by "the head of the Ukrainian government" Nikita Khrushchev.[38] Therefore, nobody from the local Ukrainian leadership, including Khrushchev and partisan commanders were honored by individual portraits. The portrait gallery would later become part of one of the main accusations against the museum and its director Lev Rakov.

After the reconstruction of 1945-46, the museum continued to expand and reconstruct separate halls, adding new materials to develop the story of the blockade, including the sections "Hungry Winter of 1941-42" and the Ladoga road updated in 1947. In May 1947 the museum's director Lev Rakov left to become the director of the State Public Library and his deputy Vassily P. Kovalev, who previously was the head of the military sections of the museum, became the new director.

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[36] Andreĭ Ivanovich Khmel′kov, *Gosudarstvennyĭ muzeĭ oborony T͡saritsyna-Stalingrada im. I. V. Stalina* (Stalingrad, 1949), 105-107.
[37] Kuzovkov and Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka "Partizani Ukrai'ni,"* 90.
[38] Ibid., 91.

Figure 3.2 Portraits in the Victory Hall. Ca.1945-49

***Local Narratives of the Siege and its Horrors in the Exposition of the Museum***

By the end of the war, Stalin and his ideological officials began to tighten control over people's minds aiming to reduce the local and private narratives of the war in favor of all-Union patriotism. Kirschenbaum argues that "the symbolically and militarily critical victory at Stalingrad marked the beginning of a shift in the form as well as the content of Soviet press coverage that facilitated a reassertion of the power of Stalin and the party hierarchy to shape public policy and private lives." [39] Aileen Rambow, who investigated wartime literature in Leningrad, argues that the local patriotism, encouraged in the early stages of the blockade, by the end of the war "was not allowed to lose sight of the Soviet Union as a whole."[40] The updated museum, however, still

[39] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, "'Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families': Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda." *Slavic Review* 59, no. 4 (2000): 842.

[40] Aileen G. Rambow. "The Siege of Leningrad: Wartime Literature and Ideological Change," in Robert W. Thurnston and Bernd Bonwetsch, eds., *The People's War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000): 167-168.

celebrated the particularity of Leningrad's victory focusing on the local heroism, the events on the Leningrad front, and the contributions of the local leadership, as evident from the portrait gallery described above. The analysis of the 1948 museum's guidebook demonstrates the continuing prevalence of the local and insular narrative of the blockade in the museum's exposition.

The guidebook's account of the defense of Leningrad in 1941 presents a clear departure from the Union-wide narrative that emphasized the role of Stalin and the collective Soviet war effort. The failure of the German offensive in August-September 1941, which led to the siege was described in the guidebook as the "first upset of Hitler's plans of the rapid war." "At Leningrad," the guidebook said, "the myth of Hitler's troops invincibility was destroyed."[41] Stalin's official periodization of the Great Patriotic War sometimes included Leningrad's defense in the fall of 1941 as a part in the so-called "active defense" stage of the war along with the battles at Moscow, Tikhvin, and Rostov, and, technically, Leningrad was the first of the four defense operations.[42] However, emphasizing that it was Leningrad's and not Moscow's defense which first "destroyed the myth of Hitler's troops invincibility" went against the accepted canon. For instance, the 1947 guidebook for Kyiv's Partisan exhibition read: "In the winter 1941-1942 the Red Army, under the leadership of the genius military leader comrade Stalin, defeated German tank divisions at Moscow, Tikhvin, and Rostov. The winter offense of the Red Army destroyed the myth of the invincibility of Hitler's army, the myth about the rapid war, giving the Soviet people faith for the victory."[43] The author of the 1949 guidebook for the Museum of the Defense of Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad wrote that when "the Hitlerite commandment, hoping to rapidly defeat USSR, and capture Moscow […] threw all its forces to the Soviet-German front […], I.V. Stalin developed a

[41] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 30.

[42] See Kliment Voroshilov's canonical interpretation of Stalin's periodization of the war at "Genial′nyĭ polkovodet͡s Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ voĭny," in *Stalin i Vooruzhennye Sily SSSR* (Moscow,1951): 87-141.

[43] Kuzovkov and Dub, *Respublikanska vystavka "Partizani Ukrai'ni,"* 33.

brilliant plan of the capital's defense and personally led the defense of Moscow.[…].The Hitlerite plan of surrounding and capturing Moscow fell through. The myth of the invincibility of Hitler's army was destroyed."[44] Stalin's official "short biography" issued in 1947 also asserted that "the defeat of the Germans at Moscow was the decisive military event of the first year of the war and the first large defeat of the Germans in the Second World War. This defeat forever destroyed the legend of invincibility of the German army created by the Hitlerites."[45] The battles at Leningrad were not mentioned in the book's account of the first stage of the war.

Throughout the museum's narrative the figure of Stalin is omnipresent; however, he is depicted as an inspiring, yet distant leader, rather than a hands-on commander. In accordance with the museum practice of the time, every room featured a relevant citation from Stalin, Kalinin, Zhdanov, or, rarely, Popkov. Additional quotes from Stalin's speeches annotated displays devoted to the special occasions and state holidays – the Anniversary of the October Revolution and Labor Day on May 1st, as well as multiple portraits of Stalin. The guidebook emphasizes the importance of Stalin as the leader of the country and his genius in the military science, such as: "following the call of comrade I.V. Stalin to organize anti-aircraft defense, party and Soviet organizations conducted a big job […];" "The defenders of the city […] fought against the vicious enemy following the call of comrade Stalin."[46] However, Stalin was not mentioned as a military commander when the guidebook discussed the events at the front, including the defense of Moscow. The credit for the construction of the Ladoga Road in the museum guidebook was given to Zhdanov,[47] while Stalin's role during the winter of 1941-42 is described as an abstract "loving

[44] Khmel′kov, *Gosudarstvennyĭ muzeĭ oborony T͡saritsyna-Stalingrada*, 75-76.
[45] G.F. Aleksandrov et.al.,eds., *Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin. Kratka͡ia biografii͡a* (Moscow, 1947), 194.
[46] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 34, 19.
[47] Ibid., 54.

care of Leningrad" via Zhdanov's quote.[48] Compare this with the 10th grade History of the USSR textbook published in 1952, that reads that the Ladoga ice road was made "on the order of comrade Stalin, to improve the hard conditions of the courageous defenders of Leningrad […]."[49] The same textbook also mentioned nothing about the loss of life in Leningrad and asserted that "A regular Soviet life continued in the besieged city, despite horrible hardships and bombings. Even children and teenagers, who did not manage to evacuate in time continued their school studies in the cold classrooms, and sometimes in the bomb shelters."[50]

The rhetoric in the museum guidebook that emphasized the uniqueness of Leningrad's defense was on par with the representation of the Heroic Leningrad in the first post-war years in the local press. On the level of the city government, the narrative was perpetuated by Alexei Kuznetsov, the main patron of the Museum of the Defense from its very beginning. After the war, when Zhdanov was transferred to work in Moscow, Kuznetsov succeeded him and became a head of Leningrad *obkom* and *gorkom*. In his January 16th, 1946 election rally speech, that reads as a hymn to Leningrad, Kuznetsov said that the *main* goal of the Germans in the first stage of the war was to capture Leningrad – the city that was "the first to stop the enemy and defeated Hitler's horde under its walls" and "eclipsed the glory of Troy."[51] However, while Kuznetsov's speech mentioned material losses that Leningrad suffered in the war, he ignored the enormous human losses that were very well known to him and other leaders of Leningrad, who preferred to stay silent on the subject.

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[48] Ibid., 64-65.

[49] A.M. Pankratova, ed., *Istoriia͡ SSSR. Uchebnik dli͡a 10 klassa sredneĭ shkoly* (Moscow, 1952), 381.

[50] Ibid.

[51] See the speech and its analysis in V. I. Demidov, Kutuzov V. A. "Poslednij udar. Dokumentalnaja povest" in *Leningradskoe delo*, Eds. V. I. Demidov, V. A. Kutuzov (Leningrad, 1990), 36-41.

The analysis of the post-war press demonstrates that in 1946-1949, Leningrad's newspapers and magazines continued to exalt the glory of Leningrad, especially on and around the anniversaries of the breaking and lifting of the blockade.[52] The publications in the press correlated the wartime feats of the past with the labor feats of the present and future, tying the "Great Victory at Leningrad" (Stalin's quote) with the goal to rebuild Leningrad as a "large industrial and cultural center of the country" (one of the objectives of Leningrad's fourth five-year plan). However, the press, which frequently turned to the topic of the wartime glory and labor feats, had been mostly silent on the horrors of cold and hunger during the siege. Historian Victoria Kalendarova had located only two articles in the local press of 1946-1949 that were devoted to the ordinary Leningraders – survivors of the siege.[53] In this context, the representation of the hungry winter in the museum of the defense was especially significant because the museum was a unique medium of information about the people's experiences in the siege.

In the report to the department of propaganda and agitation of the city party committee that accounted for the work completed by the museum in 1946, the director of the museum Lev Rakov emphasized that reconstructing sections "Hungry Winter" and "Ladoga Road" will "once again attract the attention of the working people of our city to the Museum and significantly increase attendance."[54] In 1946, Rakov wrote, the workers of the museum took many field trips to the sites of battles and collected material artifacts related to the "epic of Leningrad." The museum had also used radio and newspaper advertisements to collect the exhibits and testimonies from ordinary Leningraders.[55]

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[52] Victoria Kalendarova, "Formiruia͡ pamia͡t′. Blokada v leningradskikh gazetakh i dokumental′nom kino v poslevoennye desia͡tiletiia͡," in *Pamiat' o Blokade: Svidetel'stva Ochevidtsev i Istoricheskoe Soznanie Obshchestva,* ed. by M.V. Loskutova (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006), 197-200.

[53] Ibid., 200-201. The articles were authored by Vera Ketlinskaya and Ilya Erenburg.

[54] Buia͡nova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ pobedy*, 172.

[55] TsGAIPD SPb., f. 25, op. 10, d. 613a, l. 4-9.

The sections "Hungry Winter" and "Ladoga Road" were reconstructed in 1947. The hall devoted to the winter of 1941-42 was significantly expanded mostly focusing on the actions of the "Party and Soviet organizations of Leningrad [that] took all measures to save people from hunger." The thesis was illustrated by many new items and documents collected by the staff of the museum in various city organizations, which showed the "energetic actions to mobilize food resources."[56] The measures taken included an order to "urgently open the floors of the grain storage facilities to use spilled grains," a "permission to use lentil waste for the population's sustenance," and a "petition to issue oil meal to increase allotments of prominent artists."[57] The effect of these materials that represented gravity of the situation in the city perhaps better than the actions of the city's leaders, was intensified by the private ads on the neighboring display: "Selling hot water," "Will deliver water for bread," "Selling coffins," etc. A large diorama, "Frozen Nevsky," that showed people getting water from the burst pipe, visually represented the reality of the infrastructural collapse (figure 3.3).

The museum also displayed photographs, drawings, and documents that explicitly showed the tragedy of the people: "Empty streets with stopped trams and trolleybuses, tired people lagging the sleds with corpses sewn into the sheets – remains of Leningraders who died from starvation or shelling, someone's belongings from a destroyed apartment, a sick person swinging with weakness is being taken to the hospital."[58] The trams, which stopped functioning in the coldest months of the first siege winter and were replaced by the children's sleds as a mode of transportation, represented not only the infrastructural damage, but, as Lydia Ginzburg observed, the severe

[56] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 46.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

disruption of normalcy and social order.[59] When the tram service was resumed in the spring, which was also represented in the museum, it was a victory of social order over chaos, the only available element of comfort.[60]


Figure 3.3. Diorama "Nevsky prospect in the Winter 1941-1942." From a 1948 series of postcards

Individual Leningraders continued to bring personal artifacts to add to the museum's collection. Arguably the most jarring exhibit displayed in the updated museum was the diary of an eleven-year-old girl, Tanya Savicheva. In shorthand notes, Tanya documented the deaths of her family members. The diary, which became perhaps the most famous personal document of the blockade, familiar to all who grew up in Leningrad and then Saint-Petersburg, ended with the words "Savichevs are dead. All are dead. Only Tanya is left." Tanya's sister Nina, who, unbeknownst to her family, was evacuated from Leningrad with her factory in February 1942, upon her return to the city in the summer of 1944 met Lev Rakov and showed him the diary. Rakov

[59] Ginzburg, *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom*, 523-524, 553-555.
[60] About the allegory also see Irina Sandomirskaia, "A Politeia in Besiegement: Lidiia Ginzburg on the Siege of Leningrad as a Political Paradigm." *Slavic Review* 69, no. 2 (2010), 310.

understood the significance of the document and suggested that Nina give the diary to the museum. Tanya died on July 1, 1944 in the evacuation, before her surviving sister and brother could locate and find her. The diary is now kept at the State Museum of History of Saint-Petersburg.

Not all exhibits donated by the Leningraders to the museum were displayed. A nurse Nina Zakharieva, saved the skin of an eaten rat and a pot in which it was cooked as a keepsake from the siege and brought it to the museum along with her diary notes in 1946.[61] The museum kept these items in the storage possibly because its narrative generally avoided mentions of eating pets and other animals during the siege, perhaps considering the topic to be somewhat indecent or embarrassing. Zakharieva's diary that included graphic descriptions of siege-time "hunting" of various animals was first published in 1970.[62]

The comparison of the 1948 and 1945 guidebooks demonstrates that the organizers of the museum continuedly aimed to tell the truth in the boundaries that were possible to them at the time. For example, while the 1945 guide read that "Excruciating hunger tormented hundreds of thousands of people; scurvy began; many died of malnutrition,"[63] the 1948 version had " Death of malnutrition became a fate of *many and many inhabitants* of the heroic city."[64] Other passages of the updated guidebook emphasized the gravity of Leningrad's humanitarian catastrophe: "Leningrad lived through unprecedented challenges in the winter of 1941-42, when the despicable enemy tried to choke the defenders of the city with the hungry death. […] The winter was very severe. The transport – trams, trolleybuses – stopped due to the lack of fuel. Weakened people had to walk to work, often walking 10-15 km at a time. The communal amenities – baths, laundries,

[61] Buianova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ pobedy*, 88.
[62] N. P. Zakhar′eva, *Prosto zhizn'. Dnevniki*, ed. P. Skobelkin, Prilozhenie k zhurnalu *Sel'skai͡a molodezh'*, v. 1 (Moscow: Molodai͡a gvardii͡a, 1970): 6-65. Also see her diary notes online, Zakharieva Nina Petrovna, accessed July 16, 2022, https://prozhito.org/person/322
[63] Rakov, *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Lening*rada," 65.
[64] Rakov, *Muzeĭ oborony Leningrada*, 43. Emphasis mine.

hairdresser salons – have closed. Plumbing and sewage were not working. […] The electric stations stopped working. The apartments were cold. Many thousands of people lived in the dark basements – bomb shelters in the large buildings."[65]

The workers of the Museum of the Defense had to navigate a fine line between telling the truth about hunger and the blockade and keeping with the ideological and political demands of the time. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, they were constrained by the internalized myth of "Heroic Leningrad." The analysis of the 1948 museum's guidebook demonstrates that the museum displayed a significant amount of exhibits and images that spoke the truth about the siege. Leon and Rosenzweig argued that "a single powerful artifact or image can overwhelm the carefully curated message spelled out on dozens of labels."[66] In this sense, the diary of Tanya Savicheva and photographs of starving children spoke louder than the words that glorified the work of the local party organization during the war. Nonetheless, it was indeed the tight connection of the museum with the Leningrad party leaders that ultimately led to its demise.

On the other hand, Steven Maddox argued that the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad clearly presented a narrative of suffering, but offered "a sanitized representation of the blockade" because it did not present "morally problematic activities such as theft, corruption, and black-market transactions, which were common in Leningrad during the war, were absent from the museum's layout, as were references to murder and cannibalism, which some people resorted to in order to survive."[67] Maddox connected these shortcomings of the museum with the "the party apparatus [which] sought to shape the public's understanding of Leningrad's wartime experience." Notwithstanding the role of Leningrad's party leadership in attempting to glorify their own actions

[65] Ibid., 43-44.
[66] Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig. *History Museums in the United States*, xviii.
[67] Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 153.

in the defense of Leningrad, one is left to wonder – would a historian expect the organizers of any public museum, devoted to a national defense operation and/or a genocidal catastrophe, to highlight cannibalism, murder, and theft among its compatriots and contemporaries? Additionally, the identification of the museum as a mouthpiece of the local party organization undermines the work of the individuals who created the museum under the extreme circumstances afforded to them. Contrary to Maddox's argument that "a narrative of suffering, deprivation, and starvation as a result of Hitler's plans to annihilate the city was clearly presented," unlike the "darker side of the blockade," it was indeed the truth about starvation and suffering during the siege that was inconvenient for both local and central leadership, silenced in the media and censored in literature.[68]

By 1949 the museum had 37 halls that displayed 7,169 items with 30,500 more in its reserves and became one of the most popular sights in the city. In 1948, the museum was visited by 350,000 people, albeit one has to account for the organized visits of the groups from factories, schools, and other organizations.[69] One of the most numerous categories of the visitors were the servicemen, many of whom had served in the fighting and ancillary forces during the war. For them, the Museum provided an important perspective on their experiences and a monument to their victory. Another large category were the school-children, especially boys, who enjoyed the massive collection of the trophy weapons and Soviet weaponry.

[68] About censorship in blockade-themed poetry see Rambow, "The Siege of Leningrad: Wartime Literature and Ideological Change," 163-164.
[69] TsGA IPD, f. 25, op. 18, d. 195, ll. 2-6.

Figure 3.4 Boys at the street exposition near the Museum. Date unknown.

Author Mikhail Glinka, whose uncle, Hermitage historian Vladislav Glinka, was friends with Lev Rakov, wrote that the Rakov was associated for him with the very first militaristic "childhood romantic fantasies." Glinka, who in 1945 went to second grade at the school on Kirochnaya Street, in a close proximity to the Museum of the Defense, described his memories:

> Our goal there was German captured armored vehicles, that packed the park in front of the museum. How many times have I sat astride the spotted cold weapons in this park? How many times have I spun already polished by other boys [weapons'] handles, latches, steering wheels ... And there was also a real plane hanging from the ceiling in the main hall of the museum, a pyramid of the German helmets and a myriad of different weapons standing along the walls and lying in the windows.[70]

The museum was also an obligatory place to tour for the various foreign groups and delegations that visited Leningrad. *Leningradskaya Pravda* articles show that just in 1947, the museum was visited by the delegations from the friendly union and cultural organizations of Italy,

[70] Mikhail Glinka, "Kniga (Pamia͡ti direktora Gosudarstvennoĭ publichnoĭ biblioteki L′va L′vovicha Rakova)," in *Istoria͡ russkogo chitatelia͡*. Vyp 5. (Saint-Petersburg, 2010), 224.

Finland, France, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Poland, and Norway.[71] These visits of the representatives from the organizations sympathetic to socialism and the Soviet Union were under the tight control of the secret police, as anything else related to foreigners. Nina Nonina recalled:

> A foreign excursion was always accompanied by the MGB [Ministry of State Security] employees under the guise of cultural workers. In addition to them, two or three more from the same team would join the group during the tour. The secrecy was, frankly, relative - they did not buy tickets, but simply showed their credentials to the ticket attendants at the entrance. The controllers signaled to us in an extremely primitive way: two fingers raised meant that we were being escorted by two MGB officers, three - three.[72]

While the glorification of the actions of the local party organization increased in the expanded museum, and the tragedy of Leningrad was superseded by its "heroics," the museum served as an unique medium that publicly displayed information about hunger and experiences of the ordinary people in the besieged city. Additionally, it was an artistically created space with an immersive effect, that provided a therapeutical experience for the survivors of the besieged city and its defenders. While the museum was consistently popular among the Leningraders and was an important tool of propaganda for both domestic and international audiences, the plans for the museum's future and further development were abruptly halted with the beginning of the Leningrad Affair in 1949. The museum fell victim to the same terror that swallowed its disgraced patrons.

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[71] Using the recent war was a common tool of the Soviet international propaganda. For example, in 1949 the Soviet mission in Israel organized an exhibition "Military art of the Soviet Army" in Haifa and Tel Aviv in conjunction with the screenings of the Soviet films, concerts, and lectures about the Soviet army, literature, and science. AVP RF, f. 089, op. 2, p. 4, d. 29, ll. 112-118, cited in B.L. Kolokolov and E. Bent͡sur, eds. *Sovetsko-izrail'skie otnosheniĭa: Sbornik dokumentov*. T. I. 1941-1953. V 2 kn. Kn. 2. Maĭ 1949-1953 (Moscow, 2000), 37-40. Another early instance of the international propaganda was a photo-exhibition in Xi'an, in North-Western China. The exhibition in September 1944 featured 900 photographs on the topics of defense of Sevastopol, defense of Stalingrad, defense of Leningrad, Soviet art, and German atrocities and destruction on the temporary occupied territories of the Soviet Union. S.L. Tikhvinskiĭ, ed., *Russko-kitaĭskie otnosheniĭa v XX veke: Materialy i dokumenty. T. IV. Sovetsko-kitaĭskie otnosheniĭa. 1937-1945. Kn. 1. 1937-1944 gg* (Moscow, 2000), 814.

[72] Nonina, *Rekviem*, 73.

### *The Leningrad Affair and the Destruction of the Museum*

On February 15, 1949 the Politburo of the TsK VKP(b) issued a secret resolution about the "anti-Party and anti-State actions" of A.A. Kuznetsov, M.I. Rodionov, and P.S. Popkov.[73] The resolution removed the three men from their posts and officially reprimanded them. A few days later, Georgii Malenkov, accompanied by a large entourage, traveled to Leningrad to personally lead a city and oblast' party plenum on February 22, which formally approved a resolution of the Politburo and installed V.M. Andrianov to lead both city and oblast' party organizations.[74] The accusations against Kuznetsov, Rodionov, Popkov and other apparatchiks included organization of the wholesale trade fair in Leningrad without approval of the central government which led to the squandering of state funds, taking on a "mission of special defenders of Leningrad's interests," falsification of election results, "boasting and arrogance," and other sins.[75] What followed was a large-scale crackdown on the Leningrad Party organizations and all city organizations and institutions, including factories, research institutions, libraries, institutions of higher educations and museums.

The workers of the museum immediately felt the effects of the purge that suddenly turned the former city leaders into the state enemies. At the March 22, 1949 assembly of the museum's party cell, its members discussed the February 22 resolution of the city and oblast' party plenum.[76] Following the widely used Soviet practice, the party cells of various organizations had to discuss and denounce the disgraced apparatchiks. The director of the museum Vassily Kovalev condemned

[73] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1520, ll. 125–127.
[74] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 49, d. 1321, ll. 2–7.
[75] Ibid. Kirill Boldovskiĭ argues that the cleansing within the Leningrad Affair had an "unclear and unconvincing" system of accusations. *Padenie "blokadnykh sekretareĭ": Partapparat Leningrada do i posle "Leningradskogo dela"* (St.-Petersburg, 2018), 220.
[76] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4440, op. 1, d. 220, ll.8-11.

"the outrageous acts of Popkov, Kuznetsov, and others. How could they fall so low?"[77] "It was not an accident," said another staff member with an insightful observation about the beginning of the Moscow's attacks on Leningrad, "that the TsK made several decisions, including about *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, because the leaders of the party organization of our city lost their touch with life, did not pay attention to the day to day work, considered themselves heroes, remembering the period of the siege, and wanted to live off the successes of the war-time."[78] Deputy director of the museum, professional propagandist Grigory Mishkevich condemned the disgraced "fathers of the city" and argued that "the exposition of the museum has a series of faults, since the museum was built on Kuznetsov's orders" and needed to be completely reviewed and revised. Mishkevich argued that the museum needed to strengthen the demonstration of the "main operations of the Great Patriotic war, better represent the life in the city, connections of Leningrad with the whole country, and, most importantly, the role of the Great leader (*vozhd'*) of the country comrade Stalin."[79] Another staff member noted about the inappropriate portraits in the museum's exposition and guidebook.

Mishkevich's argument about the direct involvement of Kuznetsov that compromised the ideological rightness of the museum was insightful; the museum was doomed, as in terms of informal Soviet networks, the institution was a direct client of the Leningrad party organization. As Benjamin Tromly demonstrated, "When Stalin's terror machine arrested a senior official, it engaged in prophylactic purging of that official's clientele."[80] During the following months, the museum and its staff continued its work while attempting to adapt to the new political realities and

[77] Ibid., 10.
[78] Ibid., 8.
[79] Ibid., 9.
[80] Benjamin Tromly. "The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics, 1949-1950." *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 5 (2004), 710.

save the museum and their jobs. Director Vassily P. Kovalev frantically wrote to various Soviet regions requesting materials on how they helped Leningrad during the siege.[81] Kovalev then became ill from stress and had to be hospitalized.[82] The head of the partisan section, Hero of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Karitsky even traveled to Odessa to learn from the local Museum of the Defense, which was originally modeled after the Leningrad's exhibition.[83] The paintings that depicted disgraced individuals were altered or removed from the walls while the staff created new plans for the expositions in order to strengthen the role of Stalin and the rest of the Union in the battle of Leningrad. These efforts to keep the museum open were halted on August 30th, when the museum was closed for a seemingly temporary reconstruction. This time, however, the museum never opened again.[84]

Nina Nonina, whose memoir has the self-explanatory title *Requiem for a Museum*, recalled the speech given by its new director Leonid A. Dubinin,[85] who arrived to the museum in August 1949, interrupted the tours and immediately closed the museum to the public. In his speech Dubinin dismissed the particularity of Leningrad's tragedy and insisted on building a new museum:

> Where did you take all these horrors from? Of course, there were some separate accidents, but they were not typical. There were temporary hardships both in the country and in Leningrad. The whole Soviet people lived through them. There was no isolation of Leningrad, the country was with you. Comrade Stalin was with you. We will build a new museum.[86]

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[81] GOPANO, f. P-3., op.1, d. 7221, l. 46, in M.A. Marchenko, ed. *My s toboĭ, Leningrad! K 70-letiiu͡ sni͡atii͡a blokady Leningrada*. (Nizhniĭ Novgorod: T͡sentr. arkhiv Nizhegor. obl., 2014), 81.

[82] Nadezhda Khudyakova, "Sud'ba Muzeia Oborony Leningrada," *Klio*, 2014, No 6 (90), 100.

[83] Ibid.

[84] See Maddox, ibid., 189-190.

[85] Nonina called him Malenkov's brother-in-law. I was unable to confirm it. Leonid Dubinin was a professional army propagandist who worked in the apparatus of V.M. Molotov after the war until he was sent to Leningrad as a part of the team that took over the affairs in the city. In 1955-1972 Dubinin was the director of the Museum of Revolution.

[86] Nonina, ibid., 84-85.

A special commission from Moscow's Agitprop then arrived to inspect the museum. The museum was accused in "showing the defense of Leningrad separately from the events on other fronts of the war," its exposition did not "conform to Stalin's periodization of the Great Patriotic War" and "obscured the care of the party, government, and personally comrade Stalin of Leningrad; the role of the working class and workers of Leningrad in its defense was downplayed." The museum was accused of "sycophantic praise" of the former leaders of Leningrad – Kuznetsov, Popkov, Kapustin, and others. The museum also "revealed classified materials about the situation in the former Leningrad front and the defense of Leningrad" and "kept explosives, bombs, live ammunition, cartridges, machine guns, and rifles in the weapons workshop and museum itself." The museum's former director Lev Rakov was deemed to be personally responsible for these crimes, as well as for initiating the "portrait gallery of the now exposed anti-party group."[87] Rakov was stripped of his Party membership, fired from the State Public Library, and subsequently prosecuted and jailed.

Over the next three years, the museum continued to work behind closed doors with its workers attempting to completely change the exposition.[88] What is perhaps most striking in the witnesses' testimonies about the closing of the museum is the brutality that was employed to destroy many of the displays, photographs, trophy weapons, documents and other exhibits. Nadezhda Khudyakova, a staff member of the Museum, calls it a "pogrom,"[89] while Nonina, emphasizes the "indescribable barbarity" of "Stalin's satraps:"

> Bonfires are burning in the courtyard of the Museum of the Defense, museum of 900 days of the blockade. Priceless, unique exhibits, original documents, relics are burning. Numerous photographs burn. Among them are a lot of children's photographs. Children of

[87] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 28, d. 251, l. 37, cited in Cited in Buĭanova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 185-186.
[88] Maddox, ibid., 190-191. Maddox describes in detail how over the next few years, the museum staff - those who had not been removed from their positions and imprisoned for perverting the history of the war- worked furiously at correcting the "mistakes" and "anti-Soviet" elements that had poisoned the layout of the institution.
[89] Khudyakova, "Sud'ba Muzeia Oborony Leningrada," 100.

> the blockade are like little old men - wrinkled faces, withered bodies, eyes of martyrs. Sculptures are smashed with a hammer in the halls of the museum. Pike poles rip off the paintings. […] Bonfires are burning. The Leningrad Defense Museum is dying…[90]

Even the completely new exposition plan was not approved by the city's *gorkom*. The museum's building was given to a military school in September 1951. The cadets proceeded to dismantle the remaining displays.[91] The museum was officially liquidated on 18 February 1953 and its remaining materials were transferred to other Leningrad museums.

The museum in Leningrad was closed in an especially brutal manner due to its patronage by the local party organization and the desire of the central government to put an end to the Leningraders' claims of exceptionalism and uniqueness of their wartime experience. Its tragic fate was conditioned by two important developments of late Stalinism: the first was the Union-wide trend in downplaying the commemoration of the war, and the second was the Leningrad Affair which destroyed the local party elites - patrons of the museum. However, one of the factors of the Leningrad Affair itself was the promotion of local patriotism and particularistic narrative of the city's wartime experience that was represented in the museum's exposition.[92] As discussed in the first chapter, the general turning-away from the war experience and the more vital needs for public spending after the end of the war as well as Stalin's purges against his highest-ranking generals, including Zhukov and Rokossovsky, had led to the lack of governmental enthusiasm for war museums as it no longer needed them for mobilization of the population. "Similarly," correctly argued Maddox, "by 1949 the memory of the blockade, in Moscow's opinion, had outlived its

[90] Nonina, ibid., 1.

[91] Khudyakova, "Sud'ba Muzeia," 100.

[92] Brandenberger demonstrates that the contradictions between the Leningrad's and Moscow's versions of the war piled up during late 40s, "Repressed Memory," 182; Steven Maddox notes that "Malenkov and Beria certainly used the particularistic myth of the blockade as evidence of disloyalty in their efforts to have Stalin attack Leningrad," Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City,* 187; Kirschenbaum argues that the purge attacked "local identities, putting an end to the wartime tolerance of local loyalties in general and of Leningraders' insistence on the uniqueness of their experiences in particular." *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad*, 143–144.

usefulness as a mobilizing force to 'resurrect' the second-most important city in the country."[93] This lack of usefulness of the museum, even with updated exposition plans that centered Stalin and Union-wide narrative of the war, had led to the 1951 transfer of its space to the military school and its final liquidation in 1953. However, had it not been for the fall of the museum's patrons, it would have probably stayed open. The case of the Leningrad museum also differs from the other closed down museums by the fact the several of its staff members faced criminal prosecution. Among the criminally prosecuted workers of the museum were its first director L.L. Rakov, the deputy director Grigory Mishekevich, the custodian Arkadii Ikonnikov, and the director of the exhibition Heroic Defense of Leningrad Sergei Avvakumov. Many other workers, especially, according to Nonina, Jewish ones, were fired.

As discussed in the first chapter, the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk was an exception to the trend of closing war museums, although even in Minsk the exhibition of the trophy weapons was closed. The state needed recycled metal for its industry more than the visible remnants of the war on its central squares and parks. The Belurusian Museum of the Great Patriotic war stayed open due to the personal vested interest in it of Panteleimon Ponomarenko, the First Secretary of the Belarusian Communist Party during the war, who controlled the creation of the museum from the very beginning and never fell out of Stalin's favor. The most significant museum development during the Great Patriotic War in Soviet Russia was the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. Leningrad's leaders also had a personal interest and involvement in creation of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad that glorified their actions during the war. However, unlike Ponomarenko, members of the Leningrad party leadership were purged as was the museum.

[93] Maddox, ibid., 188.

***Victory at Svir***

Another, much smaller and less known war museum called *Victory at Svir* fell victim to the Leningrad Affair in the same manner as the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. The comparison between the fates of the two museum sheds the light on the scale of the deliberate destruction of the local memory of the war due to its direct or indirect connection to the Leningrad Party organization.

Figure 3.5 The monument at the Victory at Svir memorial complex. Before 1951.

The memorial complex Victory at Svir (*Svirskaia pobeda*) was built by the Soviet fighters of the Karelian front in the town of Lodeynoye Pole to commemorate the Svir-Petrozavodsk operation against the Finnish forces (June 21– August 9, 1944) and, more specifically the bloody crossing of the Svir River on June 21-22, 1944. While the battle was still raging, the Military Council of the Karelian Front decided to create a memorial on the Svir River. In the same year, on

November 7, the anniversary of the October Revolution, a large memorial complex was opened.[94] The memorial complex included a twenty-hectares park, a museum, seven pavilions that displayed Soviet and Finnish weapons, and a 17.5-meter tall monument of glory with the statue of Stalin on top and a sculptural group of soldiers in battle on the bottom.[95] The memorial park included trenches and fortification pillboxes that were preserved with concrete. Administratively, the complex became a branch of the Central Museum of the Red Army.[96]

What did the Leningrad Affair have to do with a war memorial in a small Karelian town? Gennady Kupriyanov (1905-1979), the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Karelo-Finnish SSR in 1938-1950, was Zhdanov's protégé and a Leningrad Party apparatchik before becoming a head of Karelia on the recommendation of Zhdanov. During the war Kupriyanov was a member of the Karelian military council and one of the leaders of the Karelian partisan movement. When Stalin's wrath fell on Zhdanov's associates during the Leningrad Affair, the waves of terror covered other Northwestern regions, including Karelia, as well as other party organizations where the leadership came from Leningrad, such as geographically distant Crimea.[97] "The clientelistic structure of Soviet politics was normally secret," argues Benjamin Tromly, "but purges brought its contours to the surface."[98]

In Karelia, the purge consumed Gennady Kupriyanov. In January 1950, the TsK of the Party of the Karelo-Finnish SSR released him from his position as the First Secretary, and three

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[94] The project for the memorial was created by the fighters of the battle - an architect Kirill N. Kalaida, who later became main artist-decorator of Moscow, an artist and designer Boris V. Vorontsov, and an artist Yaroslav V. Titov.
[95] See museum's guide-books *Svirskai͡a Pobeda. Spravochnik-putevoditel'*. Lodeĭnoe Pole, 1944, and *Svirskai͡a Pobeda. Spravochnik-putevoditel'*, Lodeĭnoe Pole, 1945.
[96] See N.V. Fatigarova, "Muzeĭnoe Delo v RSFSR v Gody Velikoĭ Otechestvennoĭ Voĭny (Aspekty Gosudarstvennoĭ Politiki)," in *Muzeĭ i Vlast'. Gosudarstvennai͡a Politika v Oblasti Muzeĭnogo Dela (XVIII—XX Vv.)* (Moscow, 1991), 197.
[97] About Crimean victims of the Leningrad Affair see Petr Garmash, "V Krymu," in *Leningradskoe delo*, eds. V. I. Demidov, V. A. Kutuzov. (Leningrad, 1990).
[98]. "The Leningrad Affair," 710.

months later Kupriyanov was arrested as a part of the Leningrad Affair.[99] The wave of terror then spread across Karelia and reached the Memorial at Svir. In 1951 the memorial complex was destroyed in the same manner as the Leningrad museum. The pavilions were demoted and the exposition collection dispersed among other museums.[100] In fact, 1,237 collection items were transferred to the Leningrad Museum of the Defense, that was by then closed to visitors for two years.[101] The only building that survived the destruction later became a museum of the local history. At the time, the statue of Stalin on the monument of glory was not removed as nobody dared to touch the "father of the peoples;" it was demoted in 1957 after the beginning of the campaign of "the exposure of the cult of personality" prompted by Khrushchev's "Secret Speech."[102]

***Impact of the Terror in Leningrad on the Memory and Historiography of the Siege***

The analysis of the press demonstrates that the events of the Leningrad Affair radically changed the official representation and commemoration of the siege. The emphasis shifted towards contextualizing Leningrad's military achievements in 1943-44 as a part of a general offensive of the Red Army under Stalin's direct military leadership.[103] Much more attention was given to the

[99] Kupriyanov was sentenced to 25 years. He was released in 1956 and subsequently rehabilitated. About Kupriyanov's case see Yu. A. Vasiliev, "Kak snimaly Kupriyanova," in *Uchenye zapiski Petrozavodskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, (2018, No 2 (171)): 24–32. The chairman of the plenary session, was long time Kupriyanov associate second secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Karelo-Finnish SSR Yu. V. Andropov, who later became a head of the KGB and then a leader of the Soviet Union. About the role of Andropov see Roĭ Medvedev, *Andropov* (Moscow, 2012), 28-29.

[100] Zh.P. Parfënov, "Kollekt͡siia muze͡ia "Svirskai͡a Pobeda" v fondovom sobranii NMRK," in Vestnik Nat͡sional′nogo muze͡ia Respubliki Kareliia. Vyp. 8, eds. M.L. Gol′denberg, et al.(Petrozavodsk : KarNT͡s RAN, 2021): 117:123; N.V. Trosheva, "Istori͡ia memoriala Svirskai͡a Pobeda," in *Sankt-Peterburg i strany Severnoĭ Evropy*, no. 7. (Saint-Petersburg, 2006): 318–320.

[101] TsGALI SPb, f. 277, op.1, d.1384.

[102] D.G. Sotchikhin, "Svirskaya pobeda*,"* in *Zabveni͡u ne podlezhit. Vyp. 2. Stat'i. Vospominani͡a. Dnevniki* (Saint-Petersburg, 2001), 48.

[103] Victoria Kalendarova, "Formiru͡ia pami͡at′. Blokada v leningradskikh gazetakh i dokumental′nom kino v poslevoennye desi͡atiletii͡a," in *Pamiat' o Blokade: Svidetel'stva Ochevidtsev i Istoricheskoe Soznanie Obshchestva*, ed. by M.V. Loskutova (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006), 202-203.

other major battles during the war such as Kursk, Moscow, and Stalingrad. The central press, such as *Pravda*, which commemorated every anniversary of the complete lifting of the blockade on its front page from 1945-1949, stopped mentioning it from 1950 onward. Even *Leningradskaya Pravda* mentioned the blockade anniversaries only in passing and sometimes not at all.[104] The newspaper resumed commemorating the lifting of the siege on its front page only in 1964, the twentieth anniversary of the event.[105]

In 1960, a memorial complex was opened on the Piskaryovskoye Memorial Cemetery, a place where about 420,000 civilians and 50,000 soldiers of the Leningrad Front were buried during the siege in 186 mass unnamed graves.[106] In a May 10 issue, on its last page, *Pravda* wrote about the memorial describing the cemetery as a site, where "the participants of Leningrad's defense were buried."[107] There were no mention of the civilian victims of the siege who constituted the vast majority of the people buried at the cemetery. "Above the mass graves," *Pravda* wrote, "a majestic female figure is rising, symbolizing Motherland, who is grieving her heroic defenders." This approach of the main Soviet newspaper in describing the monument was in direct contradiction with the intended message of the memorial that mourned all Leningraders – victims of the siege. On a granite wall behind the Motherland statue, the words of Olga Berggolts were carved:

> Here lie Leningraders
> Here are city dwellers - men, women, and children
> And next to them, Red Army soldiers.
> They defended you, Leningrad,
> The cradle of the Revolution
> With all their lives.
> We cannot list their noble names here,

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[104] Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 189.

[105] See *Pravda*, January 27th, 1964 and January 28th, 1964.

[106] About the memorial see Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, 191-208; David L. Hoffman, "Representations of gender in Soviet war memorials,"117- 120.

[107] *Pravda*, May 10th 1960, No. 131, p.6.

There are so many of them under the eternal protection of granite.
But know this, those who regard these stones:
No one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten.[108]

Nonetheless, neither the "heroic defenders" of Leningrad, nor the city itself were mentioned in the speech that Marshall Malinovsky had given on the occasion of Victory Day that described the main events of the War and its consequences and was published in the same issue of *Pravda*.[109]

Despite the officially imposed restrictions on the commemoration of the siege, *blokadniki* continued to develop special local historical and cultural narratives through private means of commemoration, including writing memoirs and preserving diaries, amateur and community efforts to collect and preserve blockade documents and artifacts, and a strong oral tradition. However, one should not downplay the impact of the 1949-1953 events on the historical scholarship of the blockade. For example, in her analysis of the impact of museum's closure, Catriona Kelly argues that the Museum of the Defense only had one room dedicated to the fate of civilians in Leningrad and "other rooms were taken up by pictures of Party leaders and by materials related to the military repulsion of the Blockade."[110] Indeed, there was only one room directly dedicated to hunger during the siege as at the time it was politically impossible to fully and truthfully talk about the humanitarian catastrophe in the city (has that time ever arrived?). However, the museum also stored 30,500 items that were not displayed, many of which were personal documents and photographs. Moreover, the Leningraders not only died during the siege, they also lived and worked for their city, they survived and helped each other to survive. This work was represented in many rooms and halls of the museum. Furthermore, the military history is not

[108] Olga Berggolts, "Here Lie Leningraders" ("Zdes′ lezhat leningradt͡sy"), 1956. Translation's author is unknown.
[109] *Pravda*, May 10th 1960, No. 131, pp. 2-3.
[110] Kelly, "'The Leningrad Affair,'" 109.

less important to study and commemorate than the experience of the civilians. Additionally, one cannot separate the military history of the siege, including the shelling and bombing of the city and the actions of its military and civilian defenders, including *MPVO* and *opolchenie,* from the events inside of the ring.

The Leningrad Affair destroyed many results of the labor of the historians, writers, artists, and museum workers of Leningrad who had put forth an enormous effort to collect, store, display, create, and publish the materials of the siege during the war and immediately after. Many siege-related books and other publications were pulled off the library and bookstore shelves as they contained wartime quotes by Kuznetsov and Popkov. Alexis Peri, a scholar of siege-time diaries, wrote that "because of the crackdown, most of the journals used in this study languished in archives or were privately hidden away until long after Stalin's death."[111] Another example is the collection "Leningrad in the Great Patriotic War" that contained 50,000 printed materials gathered by the workers at the State Public Library. The collection lost 30,000 items as a result of the ideological cleansing of the Leningrad Affair.[112] The purges against the Museum and other city institutions that collected the materials of the siege, including the State Public Library and Istpart, caused destruction and loss of written and material sources and the interruption of the historical study of the blockade as many sources became unavailable for historians. A first scholarly book on the siege was published only in 1966 and was heavily censored.[113]

***Legal Implications of Starving Leningrad and Commemoration of the Siege. An Interlude***

The year 1946 in Leningrad started with a public execution of eight German officers and soldiers who were indicted for war crimes against civilians and the destruction of the cultural

[111] Peri, *The War Within*, 248.
[112] G. L. Sobolev, *Leningrad v bor'be za vyzhivanie v blockad*e, vol. 1 (Saint-Petersburg, 2013), 31.
[113] Ibid., 30-32.

heritage committed on the occupied territories of the Leningrad oblast' (in its pre-war borders which included Pskov and Novgorod). The public trial by military tribunal started on December 28th and the sentence was delivered on January 4th. Eight out of eleven defendants, including Major General Roemmlinger, were sentenced to death and three to long hard labor prison times.[114] The death penalty by hanging was inflicted the very next morning on one of the city's squares and was viewed by thousands of Leningraders, including children. The trial, as well as the execution, were filmed for the 1946 documentary People's Sentence (*Prigovor naroda*). Pavel Luknitsky, who witnessed the trial and the hanging, wrote about his feelings of served justice:

> Probably, if I had seen a public execution before the war, such an execution would have made a terrible impression on me. But, obviously, as for everyone who spent the entire war in Leningrad and at the front, nothing can impress me too much. I did not think that in general everything would turn out to be so relatively unimpressive for me. And I did not see people on the square who, apart from some excitement, would be affected by the impressions of this spectacle. Probably, everyone who survived the war and hated the vile enemy felt the justice of the sentence and experienced a sense of satisfaction, knowing what kind of animal-like creatures were those who were hanged today for all their countless atrocities.
> I felt no pity.[115]

The main figure of the trial was Heinrich Roemmlinger, military commander of Pskov in 1943-44 who, along with his subordinates, was accused of mass extermination of people, burning of villages, and sending civilians into slave labor in Germany. Other charges on the trial included destruction of cultural heritage in the suburbs of Leningrad and the ancient cities of Pskov and Novgorod. The trial was held in Leningrad, but it had little to do with the experiences in the

[114] Like other Soviet trials against the German POWs, the Leningrad trial was completely controlled by the Kremlin and the sentence was discussed and approved by Vyacheslav Molotov. About the trial see D. Astashkin, "The Leningrad Trials of German War Criminals in 1945–1946: Political Functions and Mediatization," *Historia Provinciae – The Journal of Regional History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2020): 503–37; A.H. Daudov et al., *Voennyĭ tribunal Leningradskogo fronta v gody Velikoĭ otechestvennoĭ Voĭny* (Saint-Petersburg, 2018), 148-168.On the Soviet trials, also see Alexander Victor Prusin, "'Fascist Criminals to the Gallows!': The Holocaust and Soviet War Crimes Trials, December 1945-February 1946." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 17, 1 (Spring, 2003).
[115] Luknit͡skiĭ, *Leningrad deĭstvuet*, 372.

besieged city. Whether the Soviet prosecutors did not find the officers who could be held responsible for the siege-caused starvation or did not want to make a special case of Leningrad is unclear. Additionally, while a special Leningrad city commission had already counted an estimated number of the siege victims, the figure had not yet been made published domestically, which could be another reason to not bring it up at the public trials. While the trial in Leningrad provided some sort of gratification for some of the victimized people of Leningrad, it was a missed opportunity in terms of setting up legal ramifications for starving the city.

The trial in Leningrad occurred on the background of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, and, as argued by French historian Nathalie Moine, qualification of the crimes in the Soviet trials was "explicitly based on the indictment counts drawn up by the Allies in preparation for Nuremberg."[116] The siege of Leningrad was included in the IMT trial's indictment on count three - war crimes, but the victims of starvation were not mentioned. As related to Leningrad, the indictment included victims that were "shot and tortured," which accounted to "172,000 persons, including over 20,000 persons who were killed in the city of Leningrad by the barbarous artillery barrage and the bombings." Leningrad was also mentioned in the indictment among the Soviet cities that suffered the biggest destruction of residential buildings and "wealthy museums."[117] The first Soviet witness, Joseph Orbeli, director of the Hermitage, testified on just that – the bombing of the Hermitage's Winter Palace. The last Soviet witness was also called to testify about Leningrad in support of Orbeli. Russian Orthodox priest Nikolai Lomakin supported Orbeli's testimony by telling about the destruction of churches in Leningrad and occupied

[116] Nathalie Moine and John Angell, "Defining 'War Crimes Against Humanity' In The Soviet Union: Nazi Arson of Soviet Villages and the Soviet Narrative on Jewish and Non-Jewish Soviet War Victims, 1941-1947," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 52, no. 2/3 (2011): 441–73.

[117] "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 1. Indictment: Count Three," The Avalon Project, accessed June 1, 2022. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/count3.asp

territories of Pskov and Novgorod, and also testified about the "ceaseless air raids of the Luftwaffe, the shelling of the city, the lack of light, of water, of transportation, of sewerage in the city, and finally the terrible starvation," as well as the deliberate bombing of churches and cemeteries.[118]

The victims of starvation were represented in the documents submitted by the Soviet prosecution, although nobody was indicted on the relevant charges. In his speech, Soviet prosecutor Lev Smirnov cited the report of the Leningrad city commission, which was submitted in full to the court. Smirnov, who emphasized that he was a citizen of Leningrad, for the first time publicly "gave figures of persons who died of hunger in Leningrad in the terrible winter of 1941-1942." He quoted from the report: "As a result of the hunger blockade of Leningrad, 632,253 people perished."[119]

Leningrad was also brought up on February 22, as a part of the case that highlighted Hitler's plans to destroy Moscow and Leningrad. Soviet prosecutor Mark Raginsky read from the September 22, 1941 secret directive of the naval staff which read, in part, that "The Fuehrer has decided to wipe the city of Petersburg from the face of the earth."[120]

Another Nuremberg trial relevant to the siege of Leningrad was the so-called High Command Trial which was part of the Subsequent Nuremberg trials held before U.S. military court. The defenders included Field Marshals Georg von Kuechler, who had commanded Army Group North during the siege of Leningrad and his predecessor Wilhelm von Leeb. Neither von Kuechler nor von Leeb were convicted on the charges related to starvation during the siege of Leningrad. The High Command tribunal "acquitted von Leeb of siege-related charges on the

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[118] "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 8. Wednesday, 27 February 1946," The Avalon Project, accessed June 1, 2022. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/02-27-46.asp#lomakin1

[119] "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 7. Tuesday, 19 February 1946," The Avalon Project, accessed June 1, 2022. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/02-19-46.asp

[120] "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 8. Friday, 22 February 1946," The Avalon Project, accessed June 1, 2022. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/02-22-46.asp

ground of military necessity, citing [American lawyer Charles] Hyde for the proposition that nothing in the Hague Regulations prohibited using starvation as a weapon of war."[121] Starvation as a method of warfare was officially prohibited by international law only in 1977 by the amendment protocols to the Geneva Conventions.

Historian Francine Hirsch, who investigated the role of the Soviets at the Nuremberg trials, argued that Nuremberg was "not just the last hurrah of wartime cooperation for the Allied powers" but also "an early front of the Cold War."[122] The High Command Trial took place between October 1947 and November 1948 when the Cold War was in full swing. As Hirsch argued, "The Soviet Union had won the war; at Nuremberg it lost the victory."[123] The same can be said about the siege of Leningrad in terms of foreign public memory. Largely due to the legal justification of it at the Nuremberg trials and the Cold War, the case of Leningrad escaped the German, and, broader, Western consciousness for many decades. The so-called "myth of the clean Wehrmacht," which portrayed the Army as apolitical and innocent of Nazi crimes stemmed from the judgements of the Nuremberg trials and West Germany's rearmament during the early stages of the Cold War.[124] Jörg Ganzenmüller demonstrates that unlike Stalingrad, the topic of Leningrad siege played almost no role in German memory post war.[125] The case of Leningrad received significant public attention

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[121] Kevin Jon Heller, *The Nuremberg Military Tribunals and the Origins of International Criminal Law* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011), 309-310. See also United Nations War Crimes Commission, *Law reports of trials of war criminals, Volume XII* (London: Published for the United Nations War Crimes Commission by H.M.S.O., 1949), 84.

[122] Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal After World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 6.

[123] Ibid., 14.

[124] The 1995 traveling exhibition of the "War of Annihilation: Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941 to 1944," which toured Germany and Austria for four years, sparked a public debate about the role of the Wehrmacht in war crimes. See Hannes Heer, Walter Manoschek, Alexander Pollak & Ruth Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of History. Remembering the Wehrmacht's War of Annihilation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); on historiography of the issue see Ben Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht, the War of Extermination, and Beyond," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): 455–73.

[125] Jörg Ganzenmüller, "Memory as a Secondary Theatre of War The Leningrad Blockade in German Memory," Osteuropa, 8-9 (2011): 7-22.

in Germany only in 2014, when the 95-year old writer Daniil Granin, co-author of *A Book of the Blockade*, was invited to give a speech in the German Bundestag on the occasion of the commemoration for the victims of National Socialism on January 27.[126]

The only trial conducted against the German war criminals in Leningrad was the case of eleven soldiers mentioned above. In 1946-47, only 18 public trials against 286 POWs took place in the whole Soviet Union. In 1951, the Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the German Fascist Invaders was liquidated and all of its collected materials were shelved in the state archive.[127] The Soviet state was officially no longer interested in investigating crimes of invaders against its own population.

***Conclusion***

The organizers and workers of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, who had to operate under ever-changing ideological circumstances, managed to create a space that uniquely represented the siege. The museum's narrative focused on the particularity of Leningrad's victory, local heroism, the events on the Leningrad front, and the role of the local party organization. Despite the prevalence of the heroic discourse in the narratives of the war and the tendency to silence the experiences of the ordinary people, the museum was able to collect and display a significant collection of the documents and materials pertaining to the genocidal hunger and other hardships experienced by *blokadniki*.

In 1949, the local patriotism and local identities became a target of the central government's actors, namely Stalin, Malenkov, and Beria, who sought to destroy the Leningrad's political elites and their aspirations of the post-war resurgence. The Museum of the Defense was

[126] In 1996 the German government chose January 27th as a day of commemoration of the victims of National Socialism due to the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27th, 1945. Coincidentally, the lifting of the blockade occurred on the same day a year earlier.

[127] A.H. Daudov et al., *Voennyĭ tribunal Leningradskogo fronta*, 164.

simultaneously one of the causes of the purge against its patrons, as the latter were accused in using the museum for the criminal purposes of self-promotion, and the purge's victim.

The events of the late-Stalinist era defined memorialization of the siege of Leningrad in both the international and domestic arenas. On the international level, the Nuremberg trials that were essentially lost by the Soviets, as well as the Cold War that limited access to local sources for Western scholars, led to the siege to be mostly forgotten for the next several decades in Germany and the rest of the Western world.

In the Soviet Union, the terror of the last years of Stalin's rule, including the Leningrad Affair and destruction of the Museum of the Defense, effectively stopped the scholarship of the blockade until the 1960s. Even then, the censorship, scarce availability of non-classified documents in the archives, and ideological restrictions significantly limited historiography until Perestroika. The political rehabilitation of Leningrad during de-Stalinization, however, led to the resurrection of official commemoration of the siege via construction of the memorials and celebration of its anniversaries. Official commemoration practices, including memorials with "singular and static meanings," that enforced the discourse of the city's heroics, then became interwoven with the private memories and meanings of the siege creating a complex narrative.[128]

The *blokadniki* - survivors of the Siege - themselves clearly understood and perceived their experiences as absolutely unique and something which was necessary to be remembered and talked about. The blockade became a foundation of the Leningrader's identity and of the evidence of the uniqueness of the city itself. Leningraders took the purges of post-war years as an attack on their special status as survivors of exceptional events. Post-war purges, therefore, contributed to the

[128] See Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, 189.

formation of the identity of the Leningrader, survivor of both the blockade and Stalinist terror.[129] The next two chapters of this dissertation explore the fates of a few Leningraders – representatives of intelligentsia, who were involved in the memorialization and study of the siege and were directly affected by both the war and Stalin's terror.

[129] About the formation of the Leningraders' and then Petersburgers' identity based on the local history see Catriona Kelly, *St. Petersburg. Shadows of the past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

## Chapter IV. Historian Lev Rakov: Museum of the Defense, and the Ideological Campaigns of Late Stalinism

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

### *Introduction*

Historians of late Stalinism argue that the Soviet nation crystallized in exactly this period.[1] The USSR acquired super-power status accepted by the world, a corresponding ideology and a sense of national pride based on its victory in the Second World War. Unlike the majority of Western countries, which witnessed radical changes to their political orders in the post-war era, the Soviet political regime became stronger, more centralized and more conservative.[2] The intelligentsia, on the other hand, as Sheila Fitzpatrick argued, received "a lasting trauma that was as much a product of the state-sponsored anti-Semitism of the late Stalin period as of the Zhdanovshchina, and laid the ground for the later dissident movement."[3] The first director of Leningrad's Museum of the Defense, Lev Rakov, in a conversation with a younger friend Mikhail Glinka, nephew of the Hermitage historian Vladislav M. Glinka, expressed the feelings of this trauma in a story about his childhood cat named Cousin Pons, that he told as a metaphor about a relationship between the intelligentsia and the state. Rakov's mother invited a man, who was loudly advertising his services on the streets, to castrate the cat. After performing the service and

[1] Evgeny Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism: The Aesthetic of Politics* (Yale University Press, 2020), 4; A. Pyzhikov and A. Danilov, *Rozhdenie sverkhderzhavy, 1945–1953 gody* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), 296; Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7-8; "Introduction: The Culture of Late Stalinism, 1941–1953," in *Soviet culture and power: a history in documents, 1917-1953*, eds. Katerina Clark et.al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 348-349.

[2] Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, 23-25.

[3] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Conclusion: Late Stalinism in Historical Perspective," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Julian Furst (Routledge, 2006), 277.

seeing Cousin Pons "crawling into a corner, turning around, yellow-eyed, and hissing," the man, "red-faced, yellow-haired, and in a red shirt," laughed and said: "He doesn't love it!" Rakov concluded: "Listen to it! It is about us! About the intelligentsia! […] 'He doesn't love it!' Ha!? It's genius! They would like it if we loved it! Ha?"[4]

While writing about a museum created in one of the most totalitarian societies in history, historians tend to focus on the leading role of the government and its official propaganda in creating the historical and memorial narrative of the museum. For example, Lisa Kirschenbaum argued that "[i]n its official commemorations of the siege, notably the exhibition (later the museum) the Heroic Defense of Leningrad, *the state* employed small, personal blockade stories as a means of establishing the emotional authenticity of the national struggle, bolstering patriotism and sustaining the 'war mood'."[5] Steven Maddox, on the other hand, credits the museum's workers and organizers in his detailed analysis of the museum's narrative, yet focuses on the role of propaganda in creating the museum and, at the same time, the significance of the museum for the Leningrad authorities' political-propaganda and the "state-sponsored memory of the blockade, which promoted a narrative of Leningrad exceptionalism and silenced issues that ran counter to the heroic myth of the war."[6] The use of "state-sponsored" in the case of the Leningrad museum can be misleading, as the main sponsor and patron of the museum was the local party organization, which, with the help of the local historians and ideologists, influenced by the works of the local authors and poets, developed its own local narrative of the siege that in certain aspects differed from the central, official narrative of the Soviet state. The narrative, permitted while the local officials were in Stalin's favor, was criminalized with their fall.

[4] Mikhail Glinka, *Manevry pamiati* (Saint-Petersburg, 2017), 189-190.
[5] Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, 80. Emphasis mine.
[6] Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*, 163.

The degree of individual initiative in the totalitarian Stalinist society is also a debatable topic. Karel Berkhoff argued that the paramount goal of propaganda was "[m]obilization, [which] was essentially getting people to do what they were told, while allowing them a small measure of initiative."[7] In this analytical paradigm, the creators of the Leningrad Museum of the Defense were mobilized to create propaganda materials in order to mobilize the others. In Stephen Kotkin's terms, they were complete subjects of the Stalinist state, negotiating and struggling against the coercive Communist project.[8] What is missing in this model are the actual personalities behind the Museum and their individual creative input, ideological agency, and initiative, which I believe was not of a "small measure." The workers of the museums were not just products of the ideology and propaganda, but also the active agents and creators of the museums' narratives. The last two chapters of this dissertation use the bottom-up perspective as I consider the people who created the museum, their experiences and goals, as well as the effects of the museum's creation and closure during the Leningrad Affair on the lives of its creators and broader – on the city's intelligentsia.

This chapter focuses on one of the founders of the museum, Lev Rakov, exploring his story as a case study of the Stalinist terror against the historians and the memory of the siege. Lev Rakov, born in 1904, lived through sharp vicissitudes of fortune, conditioned by the socio-political developments of the Soviet state and its unpredictable policy changes. Imprisoned twice – in 1938 and 1950 - he built a brilliant career as a historian and administrator having worked in the most important institutions of Leningrad; he also co-authored two successful plays during Khrushchev's Thaw. This chapter explains how Rakov became a person who created the largest wartime museum

[7] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 7.
[8] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 22.

in the Soviet Union, how it became a huge success due to the work of its creators, and the consequences of its success that resulted in a campaign of terror. This campaign was especially cynical and traumatic as it affected the people who not only survived the siege but also performed ideological work for the state that disposed of them after changing its course. In this sense, their stories underline the arbitrary nature of the Soviet terror, observed by Sheila Fitzpatrick: "Political leaders made abrupt switches in state policy, often discarding without explanation a course that had been ruthlessly pursued for years and substituting something completely different, even contradictory. Every time this happened, some arbitrarily chosen scapegoats were punished for overzealousness in carrying out the old policy."[9]

In order to paint a more complete picture, the chapter will touch upon the fates of other people who were affected by the shifting attitudes of the Soviet state towards the commemoration of the Siege: Rakov's associates Mikhail (Moisei) Rabinovich and Sergei Avvakumov. In broader terms, this chapter contributes to the traumatic history of the Leningrad intelligentsia during late Stalinism, exploring how the Stalinist state bullied, intimidated, and criminally prosecuted the members of its intellectual elite in order to suppress potential dissent and increase compliance.

***Early Life***

Lev Rakov was a product of a union between what Yury Slezkine described as a Jew who left his home and "converted to Pushkin's faith" by joining the ranks of the Russian intelligentsia, and a member of the Russian gentry, both of whom "were at war with their parents."[10] Lev Lvovich Rakov was born in far-away Yakutsk where his father, an Odessa-born and Zurich-educated Jew, professional revolutionary Lev Vsevolodovich Tesler, was in exile after being criminally

[9] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2018.
[10] Yuri Slezkine *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 140-146.

prosecuted in 1898 for his role in Kyiv's revolutionary group League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.[11] In Yakutsk, Lev Tesler was a participant of the famous "Romanovka" uprising of the 56 political exiles in February-March 1904, which led to his imprisonment at the time of his son's birth.[12] Lev Rakov's mother – Elizaveta Dmitrievna Rakova, born in a noble family in quiet Totma, Vologda Governorate, graduated from the Saint-Petersburg Women's Medical Institute, where she became involved in the student revolutionary movement which led her to Yakutsk.[13] Perhaps because the laws of the Russian Empire did not allow for the marriages between Russian Orthodox and Jewish people, the child was born out of wedlock and received his mother's surname. After the amnesty that followed the October Manifesto of 1905, Lev Tesler was released from prison and the family went to Saint-Petersburg. Soon, however, Tesler returned to Odessa and the couple broke up.

Lev Rakov's biggest passion was Russian military history. He collected tin soldiers his whole life but especially loved the navy; "as a child, he already knew the names of all the battleships and cruisers of the Russian fleet, as a teenager he was well versed in the history of naval battles, when he became a youth, there was probably no such article on the topics of the fleet from the Military Encyclopedia […], the content of which he could not comment on with some additions."[14] Rakov dreamt of becoming a naval officer, but these dreams were crushed due to his

[11] V. Manilov, "Ocherk po istorii sot͡s.- dem. dvizheni͡a v Kieve 80-90 gg. (prodolzhenie)," *Letopis' Revoliutsii*, no. 5 (1925): 21-41. Philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who in 1922 was expelled from Soviet Russia on the so-called "philosopher's steamboat," was arrested in March 1898 in Kyiv and was accused, among other things, of being connected to Tesler, which Berdyaev denied. See N. A. Berdi͡aev, *Ob"i͡asnitel'nai͡a zapiska v Departament poli͡tsii*, (1898), published online in Yakov Krotov Library, accessed June 1, 2022, http://krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1898_police.html

[12] All imprisoned "Romanovka" participants were amnestied after the October Manifesto of 1905. About the uprisal and the role of Lev Tesler see P. Teplov, *Istoriia I͡akutskago protesta. Dělo "Romanovt͡sev*" (Saint-Petersburg, 1906).

[13] A. L. Rakova and Rakov, L. L. *Lev L'vovich Rakov: tvorcheskoe nasledie, zhiznennyĭ put'* (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), 11-12.

[14] Glinka, *Manevry pamiati*, 173.

mother's gentry origins that made him socially alien enough to be refused admission to a Soviet navy school. Very quickly, however, Rakov found himself in a society which was very different from the military ranks he dreamt to join. In October 1923, Rakov, who was then a University student, became acquainted with the poet Mikhail Kuzmin, who became one of his closest friends until Kuzmin's death in 1936.

Mikhail Kuzmin, a gifted poet of the Russian Silver Age and a prominent representative of Russian avant-garde, was the first openly homosexual Russian author.[15] Kuzmin lived and was in a long term relationship with the writer Yury Yurkun (1895-1938), who was bisexual and in 1921 entered a marriage (unregistered) with the actress Olga Hildebrandt-Arbenina, a muse of Osip Mandelstam and Nikolai Gumilev.[16] Kuzmin eventually made peace with the menage a trois, and allowed himself other relationships.[17] Curious literary scholars debate about the extent of the physical relationship between Kuzmin and Rakov; however, it is certain that both men influenced each other's lives and continued their deep friendship even after the end of their on and off quasi-romance that lasted between 1923 and 1926.[18] Kuzmin introduced Rakov to the most brilliant

[15] Dan Healey describes Kuzmin's novel Wings (1906) as the "first modern coming-out story with a happy ending in any language." *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2001), 101. About Kuzmin see N. A. Bogomolov and John E. Malmstad, *Mikhail Kuzmin: Iskusstvo, zhizn', epokha* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), and its translated and revised edition John E. Malmstad and Nikolay Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: A Life in Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); P. V. Dmitriev and A. V. Lavrov, eds., *Mikhail Kuzmin. Literaturnai͡a sud'ba i khudozhestvennai͡a sreda* (St.-Petersburg, 2015); G.A. Morev, ed., *Mikhail Kuzmin i russkai͡a kul'tura XX veka: tezisy i materialy konferent͡sii 15-17 mai͡a 1990 g* (Leningrad, 1990); his diaries were partially published M. A. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik, 1905–1907*, eds. N. A. Bogomolov and S. V. Shumikhin (St. Petersburg, 2000); Mikhail Kuzmin, "Dnevnik 1921 goda," eds. N. A. Bogomolov and S. V. Shumikhin, in *Minuvshee. Istoricheskii al'manakh* (1993): 12: 423–94, 13: 457–524, and *Dnevnik 1934 goda*, ed. G. A. Morev (St. Petersburg, 1998).

[16] Homosexuality was not criminalized in the USSR until 1933. See Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia,* ch. 8, 207-229. Hildebrandt-Arbenina suggested that Kuzmin's "tragedy was that he fell in love with men who loved women, and even if they went into a relationship with him, they did it out of love for his poetry and out of interest in his friendship." O.N. Hildebrandt-Arbenina, *Devochka, kati͡ashchai͡a serso…* (Moscow, 2007), 306.

[17] John E. Malmstad and Nikolay Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: A Life in Art*, 288-289.

[18] Malmstad and Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: A Life in Art*, 317-318*;* Nikolay Bogomolov, "K Tekstologii Stikhov Kuzmina Serediny 1920-kh Godov," in *Razyskanii͡a v oblasti russkoĭ literatury XX veka. Ot fin de siècle do Voznesenskogo*. Vol. 2 (Moscow: NLO, 2021): 17-28.

bohemian circle of Leningrad and dedicated to him a poem cycle "New Hull" (1924), as the poet, then infatuated with Rakov, thought that the latter resembled German actor Paul Richter who played Edgar Hull in the silent film *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922). Rakov kept the utmost respect and love for the poet his whole life, directly and indirectly referencing Kuzmin's poetry and persona in his own writings. Throughout all life calamities, he kept a collection of dedicated to him poetic manuscripts written by Kuzmin in the 1920s.[19]

Surrounded by the creative crème de la crème of Leningrad, Rakov, who dropped out of University, was not taken seriously. In order to establish himself as an independent person, and under the influence of his first wife Natalia Sutlanova (friend of Hildebrandt-Arbenina), Rakov reenrolled in the University in 1927.[20] His bohemian friends laughed at his efforts to speak "in the modern fashion," i.e. his efforts to fashion himself in accordance with the Bolshevik discourse.[21] Determined to restart his life, Rakov was shaken by a summons to the GPU that questioned him about his relationship with Kuzmin.[22] The GPU interrogated him about Kuzmin's social circle, conversations at his house, if Rakov's alleged monarchism was influenced by Kuzmin, and "what besides homosexuality ties him with [Kuzmin]." Rakov was scared to be expelled from the University and exiled.[23] However, for now the GPU left him and Kuzmin alone. By the end of the 1920s, Rakov was not only strongly connected with the literary circles of Leningrad, but was also

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[19] Ark Lu͡tsenko, *Opalennyĭ Serebri͡anym vekom* (Saint-Petersburg, 2010), 51-53; A.L. Rakova, *Lev Lvovich Rakov*, 373; N.A. Bogomolov, "K tekstologii stikhov Kuzmina serediny 1920-kh godov," in *Mikhail Kuzmin. Literaturnai͡a sud'ba i khudozhestvennai͡a sreda* (St.-Petersburg, 2015), 59-61.

[20] A.L. Rakova, *Lev Lvovich Rakov*, 35-36.

[21] Hildebrandt-Arbenina, 287. Hellbeck argued that "Bolshevik activists called upon all members of the Soviet population to adopt the agenda of revolutionary transformation and become personally transformed in the process. To belong to the revolutionary community and to help carry out the laws of history promised intellectual, moral, and aesthetic fulfillment." *Revolution on My Mind*, 347.

[22] Mikhail Kuzmin and his circle had been watched by the Soviet secret police for many years, since Yurkun's arrest in 1918. GPU-NKVD were suspicious of Kuzmin's homosexuality and "decadence." Malmstad and Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin*, 348-350. Also see N.A. Bogomolov and S.V. Shumikhin, "Predislovie," in M.A. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik 1905-1907* (Saint-Petersburg, 2000), 5-19.

[23] Malmstad and Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin*, 348.

ready to begin his career as a professional historian after he graduated University in 1930 with a degree in Western European History.

***Beginning of Career***

The 1930s were a paradoxical time for historical scholarship. On the one hand, the decade saw waves of unprecedented political terror against scholars, beginning with the so-called Case of the Academicians (*Akademicheskoe delo*) which occurred between 1929-1931 and was fabricated to prosecute a large group of scholars and researchers (over one hundred people) affiliated with the Academy of Sciences, most of them representatives of the old-school, prerevolutionary historical science. Leningrad's historical school was especially affected by the trials, since the majority of victims were Leningraders, including three out of four prosecuted academicians - N.P. Likhachev, S.F. Platonov, and E.V. Tarle.[24] One the other hand, history, which the Soviet government officially removed from educational programs in schools and universities alike shortly after the establishment of the Soviet state, returned as a subject of study in 1934.[25] The iconoclastic policies of the Cultural Revolution from 1928-31 in scholarship and education started to reverse, including the removal of class restrictions for admitted students.[26] The 1930s imposed a strict ideological framework, but allowed to find in the historical scholarship "not only class struggle, but also political and even national conflicts; at the same time, Great Russian nationalism has not yet gained sufficient strength."[27] However, history in the Soviet Union had decisively become a

[24] See V.P. Leonov, J.I. Alferov, and B.I. Ananich, eds., *Akademicheskoe delo, 1929–1931 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy sledstvennogo dela, sfabrikovannogo OGPU* (Saint-Petersburg, 1993-1998).

[25] For a detailed discussion about early Soviet university reforms see "Professors and Soviet Power," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), 37-64.

[26] I am using the term "Cultural Revolution" meaning a historical phenomenon first analyzed by Sheila Fitzpatrick in "'Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1932," *Journal of Contemporary History* 9:1 (1974): 33-52; *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, 1928-1931, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington, 1978), also see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution Revisited," *The Russian Review* 58, no. 2 (1999): 202–9.

[27] Bogdana Koprzhiva-Lur'e, *Istorija odnoj zhizni* (Paris: Atheneum, 1987), 163. The book is a biography of a Soviet Jewish classicist Solomon Ya. Lurie, written by his son Yakov S. Lurie, that was published under the name of his aunt in this edition.

handmaiden of ideology, readmitted to the canon after the disciplining of the Cultural Revolution. Historians were routinely employed by various party organizations to perform ideological and political-propaganda duties.

The life and work of a then-young historian Lev Rakov personified these developments, as, despite his arrest and imprisonment in 1938, he was able to build an impressive career before the war and became an army propagandist with its beginning. The atmosphere of terror of the 1930s accompanied the efforts of the students and young scholars, Rakov among them, to foster themselves as a new generation of Soviet historians. The purges that swallowed one of the members of their circle after another did not stop neither their work, study, and scholarship nor their enjoyment and celebration of life − the seemingly paradoxical situation when people continued to live their everyday lives while their friends and co-workers were being arrested until it was their turn. Rakov described these feelings in one of his short stories, first published long after his death. Rakov defined the second half of the 1930s as an "unforgettable time of gigantic efforts, unseen before enthusiasm, intense building of the new and complete rebuilding of the old." At the same time, life had a "gloomy side […], too many were suddenly separated from their loved ones, too many perished forever. The mere expectation of this fate, like an illness at a time of a deadly epidemic tormented and wore people out."[28]

In 1929-1930 Rakov, still a student, briefly worked at the Russian Museum, where he participated in the organization of the exhibition "War and Art," which aimed to expose military propaganda by showing "how predatory interests are camouflaged, how the ruling class in capitalist countries masks its true, predatory goals with the help of art, how it tries to create a patriotic frenzy, how it incites national and religious strife in order to more easily set the working

[28] Lev Rakov, "P͡iat′ apel′sinovykh zernyshek, ili zasushennai͡a pchela," in *Lev Lvovich Rakov. Tvorcheskoe nasledie. Zhiznennyj put'*, ed. A.L. Rakova (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), 137.

people of one country against their brothers fighting on the other side of the border."[29] The other ideological goal of the exhibition was to help improve the defense of the country and the Red Army and glorify the October Revolution. The exhibition denounced the "false pacifism of imperialists" and even the Western "radical petit bourgeois intelligentsia" with their general concern for the victims as they had no understanding that "capitalism can only be destroyed with violence and war."[30] At the end of 1930, Rakov quit the Russian Museum and enrolled as a graduate student (*aspirant*) in the State Academy of the History of the Material Culture (GAIMK or Akmakult) – an institution devoted to the study of the ancient history within the Marxist paradigm of social formations.[31] Due to the massive purges against historians during the Case of the Academicians and closures of the history faculties in the Soviet universities, GAIMK became one of the most important centers of historical scholarship in the USSR.[32] There, Rakov studied classical antiquity under a prominent Marxist scholar of classical antiquity, Sergey Ivanovich Kovalev, who later became a cause for Rakov's first arrest.

Lev Rakov did not enjoy the chosen field of study nor did he make any proper contribution to its scholarship, but it was ancient history in its Marxist interpretation that opened him many professional doors and helped him advance his career. Rakov began teaching undergraduate classes at the Herzen Pedagogical Institute and the newly formed Leningrad State History-Linguistics Institute (LGILI, later LIFLI),[33] which a few years later was merged back with the

[29] Gosudarstvennyĭ Russkiĭ muzeĭ, Khudozhestvennyĭ otdel, *Voĭna i iskusstvo* (Leningrad, 1930), 3.
[30] Ibid., 11.
[31] About GAIMK/Akmakilt and its ahistorical theoretical interpretation of all ancient societies as belonging to the slavery formation see Bogdana Koprzhiva-Lur'e, *Istorija odnoj zhizni* (Paris: Atheneum, 1987), 140-144; Igor Mikhailovich Diakonov, *Kniga vospominaniĭ* (Saint-Petersburg, 1995), 275-279.
[32] A.A. Formozov, "GAIMK kak t͡sentr sovetskoĭ istoricheskoĭ mysli v 1932—1934 godakh," in *Russkie arkheologi v period totalitarizma: Istoriograficheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 2006), 162-185.
[33] About the institute see Diakonov, *Kniga vospominaniĭ*, 257-344; Lidiia Lotman, *Vospominaniia͡*, (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), 76-87.

Leningrad State University. Many of his students became prominent scholars, among them orientalist Igor Mikhailovich Diakonoff (1915-1999, also spelled Diakonov), literary scholar Yury Mikhailovich Lotman (1922-1993), philosopher Moisey Samoylovich Kagan (1921-2006), and his future friend and co-author, writer and historian Daniil Natanovich Alshits (1919-2012). Their recollections about Rakov as a professor include compliments not only to his lectures but also mention his elegance and a sense of fashion unusual for the time.[34] Yury Lotman, who first went to Rakov's lectures when his older sister Lydia was a University student and Yury himself was still a young teenager, recalled that at a time when the "old professors came to the lectures in frayed suits that were seemingly sewn back in the pre-revolutionary years," Rakov wore "exquisite foreign suits with double-breasted vests." Lotman attributed Rakov's panache to a short "flash of 'prosperity' that determined the 'renaissance' in last pre-war years.[35] This "renaissance" was quite controversial as "grey-skinned women with babies in their arms, who managed to escape the Ukrainian and Kuban hunger, were hiding from the police on Nevsky Prospect," and was a "feast in time of plague" before the war that was felt in the air. Those who did not "fall directly under the tank treads of Stalin-Beria terror" hurried to enjoy life.[36] And Rakov, "owner of many suits and wives," certainly did.[37]

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[34] See references in A.L. Rakova, author and ed., *Lev Lvovich Rakov. Tvorcheskoe nasledie. Zhiznennyj put'* (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), 39-40. Rakov's daughter Anastasia denied her father having any "foreign" suits and attributed his elegance to his sense of style and special attention and care to the wardrobe that in reality was modest.

[35] Also see Lidiia Ginzburg, who described 1930s as not just "labor and fear," but also many talented and ambitious people, some of whom had a relatively prosperous lifestyle. "Stalin created elites not only from officials, but also from writers, academicians, professors etc. […] The elites were created as a pillar of power; but they were also first to die." *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom* (Leningrad, 1989), 306-308.

[36] Yury Lotman, "Dvoĭnoĭ portret,"in *Lotmanovskiĭ Sbornik*, Volume 1, ed. E.V. Permiakov (Moscow, 1995), 59-60.

[37] The designation is a quote from an epigram that his then-student Daniil Alshitz wrote about Rakov. D. Al', "Vydai͡ushchiĭsi͡a dei͡atel′ kul′tury Peterburga," in *Lev Lvovich Rakov. Tvorcheskoe nasledie. Zhiznennyj put'* (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), *384.*

***The Hermitage. First Arrest and Imprisonment***

After a short stint at the Russian Museum, Lev Rakov continued his museum career in Leningrad's most respectable and loved institution - the Hermitage. "At the time," wrote Rakov, "they were diligently trying to replace the old cadres with new ones, and graduate students were considered to be a particularly privileged group [to hire]."[38] New Soviet culture called for the specialists, who successfully fashioned themselves in the Stalinist discourse. Rakov began working as a tour guide in 1931, but his career quickly advanced. He became a scientific secretary of the Hermitage in 1937, working on various administrative and organizational tasks at the museum. In 1937, he participated in the preparation of an exhibition commemorating the centennial of Alexander Pushkin's death, whose persona was ideologically appropriated by the Soviets as a part of their nation-building project that was increasingly based on the Great Russian nationalism.[39]The exhibition was organized by the staff of Leningrad's various cultural institutions who, according to Rakov, faced two challenges.[40] First, "the best things" were sent to Moscow to be displayed at the All-Union Pushkin's exhibition. Second, the organizers had issues designing the final section of the exhibition "Pushkin in our days." The solution was to fill the hall with a multitude of Pushkin's books published in recent decades, an artistic solution lacking ideological substance, which was not to the liking of the city's officials. The night before the opening, the museum underwent an inspection. A city bureaucrat, Ivan Sergeyevich Kasparov (purged in 1938), after a brief examination said: "Everything is clear [to me]. […] In the old halls – paintings in beautiful

[38] Rakov, "I͡a i sam tozhe gubernator," *Zvezda*, no.1 (January 2004), 94.

[39] About Pushkin's jubilee as a legitimizing event for the Soviet power, see David Brandenberger, "'The People's Poet': Russocentric Populism During The Ussr's Official 1937 Pushkin Commemoration," *Russian History* 26, no. 1 (1999): 65–73; Stephanie Sandler, "The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee as Epic Trauma," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, eds. Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison Wis: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 193-220.

[40] See his memoirs about the exhibition in Rakov, "Mne trudno sudit'," *Zvezda* No.1 (January, 2004), 103-106.

frames, statues, mahogany furniture. And in the Soviet section – emptiness! Just books… The enemy's hands worked here." Rakov and other organizers were terrified of the repercussions – "the aim of the orator was clear."[41] The powerful Hermitage director Joseph Orbeli, who was out of town during the commission, took matters in his own hands the next morning by calling Leningrad's party bosses in Smolny, and saved the exhibition and its organizers, putting Kasparov to shame. The arrests at the Hermitage, however, continued throughout the 1930s, and despite his best efforts, Orbeli could not always save his staff members.

In a wartime letter to his then-lover Marina Fonton, Rakov himself described "the elation of 1938, intoxication with work affairs, and the success of this period" as a "feast in time of plague."[42] 1937-38 saw purges and attacks against many of Leningrad's historians, many of whom were Rakov's friends and colleagues including many from his circle of literary acquaintances: Yury Yurkun, Benedict Lifshitz, Nikolay Zabolotsky, and others who were prosecuted during the fabricated "case of Leningrad writers." Mikhail Kuzmin was fortunate to die of natural causes in 1936 before the beginning of the Great Terror.[43]

Rakov's finest hour at the Hermitage came precisely in 1938 with the grandiose exhibition "Military past of the Russian people," which Rakov initiated and organized following his true passion – Russian military history. "It was a pleasure," wrote Rakov in an auto-biographical novella, "to sort out the austere and beautiful things - monuments of Russian glory: various broadswords, battle scenes, uniforms."[44] Rakov was thrilled to discover the previously forgotten

[41] Rakov, "Mne trudno sudit'," 103.
[42] Rakov, "Pis'ma," in *Lev Lvovich Rakov* (Saint-Petersburg, 2007), 363.
[43] Anna Akhmatova said about his death that it was a "blessing, because otherwise he would die even more terribly than Yurkun, who was executed by a firing squad in 1938." Nikita Struve, "Vosem′ chasov s Annoĭ Akhmatovoĭ," in *Anna Akhmatova. Sochineniia͡*, eds. G. P. Struve and B. A. Filippova, vol. 2, (Washington D.C.:MLS, 1968), 331.
[44] Rakov, "Les Promenades dans les Environs de L'amour," in *Lev Lvovich Rakov*, 200.

hat of Friedrich II which the Prussian emperor lost at the 1759 Battle of Kunersdorf.[45] In creating the exhibition Rakov collaborated with other specialists in Russian military history, including colonel Mikhail Liushkovskii – a famous collector of tin soldiers. Rakov, who also collected tin soldiers, together with Liushkovskii created a grandiose model of the Battle of Borodino in which they used miniature soldiers in 1812 uniforms from their own collections. Among other historians who participated in the creation of the exhibition and its guide were uniform expert and Rakov's life-long friend Vladislav Glinka, head of the Hermitage Arsenal department Mikhail Kosinskii, and historian-medievalist Alexander Rozenberg; both Kosinskii and Rozenberg were arrested on July 16, 1938.

The exhibition which opened on September 7 (the anniversary of the Battle of Borodino), according to Igor Diakonoff, "amazed everybody. [At the time], even saying the word "Russia" (instead of USSR or, at the worst, RSFSR), was something anti-Soviet."[46] Indeed, only eight years have separated the 1930 "War and art" exhibition at the Russian Museum, that was created to critique the imperialism of tsarist Russia and its militaristic nationalist propaganda, and the 1938 exhibition at the Hermitage, that glorified the military feats of the "Russian people" in the two centuries between the Polish–Russian War of 1609–1618 and the Patriotic war of 1812. Most importantly, the exhibition "tended to conflate the Russian and Soviet historical experiences."[47] The Soviet-Russian historian Rafail Ganelin (1926-2014) argued that during the 1930s, Stalin personally stood behind "everything that was happening in the areas of historical scholarship and teaching," including the general allowance of "traditional" academic scholarship of history which

[45] Ibid. See Friedrich's hat in the Hermitage collections: "Shl͡iapa general′ska͡ia, prinadlezhavsha͡ia Fridrikhu II," The State Hermitage Museum, accessed July 30, 2022, https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/12.+costumes%2c+uniform%2c+accessories/2687642

[46] Diakonov, *Kniga vospominanit̆*, 499.

[47] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 90.

related to the study of the history of nation-states. In turn, the study of the Russian state's history began to associate with the "patriotization" of national history, at first cautious, and always intertwined with Marxism.[48] In this sense the exhibition at the Hermitage was among the first large cultural events that signified the official shift of state ideology from proletarian internationalism to the Russian national patriotism that occured in these eight years of Stalin's rule.[49] As discussed in the first chapter, the ideology of the Great Russian nationalism flourished with the beginning of the German invasion in just three years and reached its peak during late Stalinism.

The success of the exhibition did not help Rakov who was arrested in November 1938 in connection with the fabricated by the NKVD case of "the Leningrad Menshevik center," which affected a large number of Leningrad's Marxist historians."[50] In January 1938 students and members of the ancient history club (*kruzhok*) of the Leningrad University were arrested on accusations of forming a counter-revolutionary Menshevik organization.[51] "The investigator," recalled one of the arrested students, Mark Botvinnik, "accused us of this: interest in antiquity in itself shows that we do not accept modernity!"[52] The wave of terror continued with the arrest of the historian of Russia Sergey Voznesensky (1886-1940) in April 1938. Voznesensky, who was

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[48] Rafail Sh. Ganelin, "Stalin i sovetskai͡a istoriografii͡a predvoennykh let," Novyĭ Chasovoĭ (1998, No. 5-6), 102-103. About the 1930s emergence of the state-sponsored ideology of Great Russian nationalism in the Soviet Union see David Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky. "'The People Need a Tsar': The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): 873–92; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2018), ch.10, 394–431.

[49]David Brandenberger claims that "perhaps concerned about the apparent exclusivity of the exhibit, Pravda published a photograph of the show in late 1938 that depicted a massive bust of Suvorov surrounded by an ethnically mixed group of onlookers." *National Bolshevism*, 91. I disagree with that assessment of the referenced photograph in November 4, 1938 issue of Pravda (p. 4).

[50] For details about the case see two articles by Viktor S. Brachev about two of the professors prosecuted as a part of the case. Viktor Stepanovich Brachev, "Delo professora S. V. Voznesenskogo," *Noveĭshai͡a istorii͡a Rossii*, v. 9, no. 1 (2019): 144–155; "'Delo' I͡a. M. Zakhera," *Obshchestvo. Sreda. Razvitie (Terra Humana)*, no. 2, (2012): 41-45.

[51] About this case see A.M. Skvorts͡ov," Razgrom antichnogo kruzhka v Leningrade (po materialam sledstvennykh del arkhiva FSB)," *Vestnik drevneĭ istorii* 77, no. 1 (Moscow, 2017): 210 – 223.

[52] M.N. Botvinnik, "Kamera No. 25," in *Pami͡ati Marka Naumovicha Botvinnika*, ed. I.P. Suzdal′skai͡a and N.M. Botvinnik (Saint-Petersburg, 1997), 114.

accused of being a part of the "illegal counter-revolutionary Menshevik organization" was physically and mentally tortured and "confessed" to creating a terrorist group of historians. Among the historians that Voznesensky (or the investigator) named as a part of the terrorist organization was Sergey Kovalev, who was then arrested in June 1938. According to Diakonoff, one of the "witnesses" testified that Kovalev planned a terrorist attack: "Kovalev entered the hall with big steps and said: 'It's time to move on to terror.' He allegedly also planned to dig an underground passage under the Neva River from the building of the Faculty of History at the end of the Birzhevaya Line of Vasilyevsky Island to the Palace Square to conduct a terrorist attack during a holiday rally."[53]

As a result of NKVD interrogations, Kovalev then "admitted" enlisting several historians to be a part of the group, including his former graduate student Lev Rakov who was then accused of leading a student club of military history with the goal of anti-Marxist propaganda against the Red Army and glorification of the fascist German army. Feeling at the height of his life with the huge success of the exhibition and in the middle of a blossoming romance, Rakov described this rapid fall: "Just as I unlocked my front door, turned out it lead not to home but to hell… I cannot talk about the last night hours. How can a person live through it? How does one not die descending down the staircase for the last time. How does one live through it? And for what did I have to live through it?"[54]

In contrast to many others who under torture confessed to the most absurd crimes and in many cases stipulated others, contemporaries' memoirs emphasized Rakov's brave behavior during interrogations. According to the law scholar Olimpiad Ioffe, at a confrontation, a procedure

[53] Diakonov, *Kniga vospominanit*, 450.
[54] Rakov, "Les Promenades," 210.

of cross-examining two indicted persons, Kovalev urged Rakov to admit his crimes in order to save his life, but the latter categorically denied any wrong-doing.[55] The NKVD records of the confrontation indeed confirm that Rakov did not admit to any crimes and asserted that he worked honestly.[56] After a year in a solitary cell, torture, despair, and a suicide attempt, Rakov was released following the fall of the NKVD boss Nikolai Ezhov, along with Kovalev and many other historians arrested on the case of the "Menshevik center."[57] After his release from prison, Rakov was reinstated at his scientific secretary job in the Hermitage, where he also continued working on the exhibitions related to Russian military history, leaving antiquity forever behind. According to Yakov S. Lurie, who, admittedly, is a biased witness due to his father's problematic relationship with Kovalev, Lev Rakov did not forgive his teacher for his wrongful testimonies against him and "subsequently expressed particular displeasure with the fact that the teacher accused him, along with counter-revolutionary activities, of homosexuality. Lev Lvovich reasonably noted that the last accusation, true or not, was of a purely personal nature, and Sergei Ivanovich did not have even a practical need to complicate his testimony with such a detail."[58] These rumors are not corroborated by the documentary evidence, but their mere existence demonstrates the extremely toxic relationship between the colleagues-historians among the constant ideological and political campaigns that bred the atmosphere of distrust and resentment.

On a personal level, the 1930s were defined for Rakov by his success with women and many affairs and relationships. One of his unlucky admirers, poet and translator Lidiia

[55] O.S. Ioffe, "O smeshnom i neobychnom (zapiski i͡urista)," in *Izbrannye trudy. Tom IV* (I͡uridicheskiĭ t͡sentr – Press, 2010), 790, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=U3WKCgAAQBAJ&hl=en_US .
[56] Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, d. P-1980, t. 4, ll. 213-215. My deepest gratitude to Artem M. Skvortzov, Chelyabinsk State University, who provided me with these records.
[57] Not all were released. For example, Rakov's Hermitage colleague Mikhail Kosinskii was exiled and released only in 1943; Sergey Voznesensky died in a prison hospital in 1940.
[58] Koprzhiva-Lur'e, *Istorija odnoj zhizni*, 166.

Averyanova, anonymously sent him a number of poems, in one of them comparing herself to a lonely Kuzmin, "exchanged by you for women, faithful and unfaithful."[59] In 1934 Rakov began living with his second wife, the mother of his daughter Alexandra Voschinina, a Hermitage specialist in ancient art. By the time of his arrest in 1938, however, Rakov, while still married, was deeply in love with then also married Marina Fonton. After his release from prison, Rakov and Fonton broke up but resumed their relationship with the beginning of the war.

***The War and the Museum of War***

As discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, the most active wave of enlistment into the volunteer military formations (*Narodnoye opolchenie*) began after Stalin's July 3, 1941 speech famous for his referral to the Soviet people as "Brothers and Sisters." Rakov joined the *opolchenie* on July 4th, along with a dozen other Hermitage workers, including orientalists Isidor Lurie, Igor Diakonoff and Alexander Boldyrev. Unlike many of the intelligentsia who joined the militia, Rakov felt in his element. As he went through the basic military training during his student years, he was assigned to be a platoon commander. Diakonoff, unfit for the regular army, but "strongly encouraged" to sign up as a militia volunteer by the secretary of the Hermitage party organization, recalled that Rakov, "a handsome, elegant person, told us that feet are just as important to infantrymen as they are to a ballerina and that we need to learn how to properly wrap the footcloths."[60] In the meantime, Josef Orbeli, who immediately understood the cannon fodder nature of the *opolchenie*, worked behind the scenes in order to get some of his staff members back, saving the orientalists and two other specialists from a very probable death.[61]

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[59] Lidiia Averyanova, *Vox Humana. Sobranie stikhotvoreniĭ* (Moscow, 2011), 79. Rakov about Averyanova see "Roman v stikhakh," *Zvezda* No.1 (January, 2004), 96-102.

[60] Diakonov, *Kniga vospominaniĭ*, 504-505.

[61] See Diakonov, *Kniga vospominaniĭ*,, 506; A.N. Boldyrev. *Osadnai͡a Zapis'.Blokadnyĭ Dnevnik* (Saint-Petersburg, 1998), 17-18.

Rakov, on the other hand, only two weeks later enlisted to serve in the regular Army in a relatively safe position of a lecturer in the system of the Army propaganda and agitation. Here, he quickly rose through the ranks becoming a head of the "agitation vehicle" at the House of the Red Army in Leningrad giving lectures to officers on military history.

While Rakov lived in the city, as a lecturer he regularly traveled to the active units on the frontline in Leningrad's surroundings. Historian Mikhail Rabinovich, who was mobilized to the army as a translator and served in the active army units, met Rakov during one of his lecturing trips to Pulkovo Heights in January 1942. Bored and anxious from the war that was then turning into protracted trench warfare, Rabinovich noted in his journal that he also would prefer to be a lecturer or do other work better suited to his education and abilities.[62] In his memoir, Rabinovich, who wrote about the constant feeling of hunger present in Leningrad even among the army troops and especially bad for those stationed inside the city, described his invitation to Rakov to spend a night in his dugout and have dinner together after the former's duty shift:

> I had some kind of porridge, vodka, of course, maybe even some bread. Lev Lvovich perked up when he heard about the dinner — after all, in Leningrad even the military were supplied noticeably worse than we were. He left [for a lecture]. [But] I was sent [..] with some kind of assignment to the combat guard. From there I could not get out until the next evening […]. When I returned, Lev Lvovich was no longer there. After the war, he repeatedly recalled this failed dinner.[63]

"Cold and hungry," staying in a dugout in February 1942 somewhere on the Leningrad front during one of his work trips to the frontlines, Rakov reflected on his pre-war life in a letter to Marina Fonton, reminiscing on his childhood winter holidays spent in provincial Totma, and his favorite neighborhoods in Leningrad, now filled with death and destruction. He noted the "inertia and tradition" nature of work of the six people in his dugout, seemingly from the army's political

[62] Rabinovich, *Vospominanija dolgoj zhizni*, 186.
[63] Ibid.

department: “they are writing, filing the paperwork, calling on the telephone. I don’t have the impression that it is important for the case.” Describing his feelings of anxiety and nostalgia, Rakov noted that maybe they will pass and he “will soon become busy with previous activities, that made [him] break through to any business, administrative and scientific, maybe will begin again the meetings, trips, reports, all the turmoil, the high peak of which was the year 1938.” He concluded the thought with the assertion that it is impossible to repeat that “the charm of a whirlwind of work” and he could not wish for it either. Rakov wrote that he wanted “peace, time, books. And us together at supper.” He added that he was scared for the future remembering “everything that happened since 1938” and all the losses before that, including his mother and Kuzmin.[64]

The feelings of irretrievable loss in regards to the beloved city itself and its community is another motif of Rakov’s writings about the siege. Reminiscing about the 1938 walks with Marina Fonton in the city’s suburbs of Peterhof and Gatchina, Rakov wrote: “How irretrievable are the days of that summer! Irretrievable if only because the places, that seemed to be eternal by their nature, were lost forever. I am talking about Leningrad’s suburbs. There is nothing to even try to say about it, just as there are no words to console a person who lost a mother or a child.”[65] After briefly passing and seeing Leningrad’s Kamenny Islands, Rakov described his feelings of the city’s death, comparing it with a dead person: “Again the departed soul and just physical embodiment: typical corpses of the [park] pavilions, corpse of the Islands, sharpened facial features of the deceased, an expression that has nothing to do with what we knew and loved before.”[66]

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[64] Rakov, “Pis’ma,” 360-363.

[65] Rakov, “Les Promenades dans les Environs de L’amour,” 197.

[66] Rakov, “Pis’ma,” 364. Barskova observes that “the perceived anthropomorphism of the suffering city” is one of the topics that “permeate Siege urban writing.” *Besieged Leningrad,* 10.

The loss of the community of old Petersburg intelligentsia is what made it especially painful. Rakov realized its desolation, as the Soviet terror, evacuation, war and hunger had all but eradicated the community that he loved and belonged to:

> Everyone and everyone died, disappeared... the last of the Mohicans left. Current disasters will eliminate all remnants of the native tribe. […] These days will most likely destroy the tradition that we lived in until the middle of last year. This is why many experience some aversion to the city, a feeling that it is impossible to build life here anymore, a desire to break with a former tradition, go to the new places. I quite understand it.[67]

By 1943, Rakov felt the moral need to participate in active warfare, as he believed that he could not call for others to sacrifice their lives in his lectures without experiencing the battles first hand. With the help of "friends" Rakov was assigned to join the task force of the Leningrad Front Political Administration.[68] As a part of the active forces he participated in the battles during the January 1943 offensive that led to the break of the Wehrmacht's siege of Leningrad. In the summer of 1943, Rakov was at the front during the infamous Sinyavino offensive of July-August. Perhaps Rakov's personal witnessing of the bloody battles in the peat swamps contributed to the Museum of the Defense's narration of the summer 1943 at Sinyavino in its exposition (as discussed in the second chapter). In one of his autobiographical stories from the series that he began writing in jail, Rakov recorded his impressions of Marshal Govorov, head of the Leningrad front. These thoughts as well as Rakov's other observations at the front, including the extremely high human cost of the military operations highly contrasted with the quotes of Govorov featured in the Musuem's exposition, where the latter contemptuously noted that the Germans "did not reckon with the casualties."[69] Rakov's notes represent the discrepancy between his role of a Soviet cultural manager and his inner feelings:

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[67] Rakov, ibid.

[68] Rakov, "Inspektorskii navyk," in *Lev Lvovich Rakov*, 360-363.

[69] Rakov, *Vystavka "Geroicheskaja oborona Leningrada,"* 102.

> He was thoughtful, attentive, but always gloomy and not talkative. […]. The regiment was on its way to battle. Most of the soldiers and officers have already participated in the battles that have taken place here. They perfectly imagined the difficulties of the task and the number of losses inevitable under these conditions. No one thought of himself [...]. But how nice it would be at this moment to hear at least one word of greetings from the commander! But he stood like a statue. If he were wearing a camouflage tunic, this would bring him closer to us. But the commander saw us off wearing a snow-white tunic, which further emphasized the remoteness of the commander from the masses of troops.[70]

Despite his melancholic feelings of the loss and wishes for "peace, time, and books," Rakov did not remain long performing the trivial job of a lecturer. A whirlwind of high status projects, ranks, and awards took him again and brought him even farther and higher than before the war, only to throw him to the lowest place possible several years later. Back in 1938 he felt the wind of cultural change that allowed him to organize the exhibition of Russian military history which became a forerunner for a whole new department of the Russian Culture at the Hermitage as opened in May 1941. Now, in 1943, Rakov, who also became a member of the party the same year, found himself in the right place and the right time to work at the Exhibition of the Heroic Defense of Leningrad which quickly became his main occupation for the next four years. His whole life and career made this challenge perfect for his interests and abilities, from his childhood fascination and knowledge of the army and navy, through the military exhibitions at the Hermitage, to his life experience in besieged Leningrad.[71]

As discussed in the second chapter, Rakov was involved in the earliest initiatives of the war exhibitions that were organized at the House of the Red Army in Leningrad and became the main force behind the large exhibition and then Museum of the Defense. While the first director of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" was the experienced party administrator and

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[70] Rakov, "Inspektorskii navyk," 361.

[71] Talking about the large amount of artifacts and documents that *blokadniki* brought to the museum, Polina Barskova credits the "enthusiastic influx of material" from the Leningraders to "the personality and ideas of […] Lev Rakov, based on his dedication to the memory and mythology of Petersburg in all its historical ordeals and incarnations." *Besieged Leningrad*, 18-19.

specialist in Soviet history Sergei Avvakumov, the work was led by Rakov. In fact, Avvakumov, purged during the Leningrad Affair, was not charged with anything directly related to the museum.

Back in post-siege Leningrad, it was Rakov's most glorious hour, albeit it was associated with a constant balancing act between the building of the narrative and the ever changing ideological directions from the party officials. However, the creators of the museum – historians, museum specialists, and artists – had not only to conform to the spoken and unspoken censorship and adhere to the ideological framework developed by the Party's propaganda officials, but also to navigate within the internalized myth that was already well established by the end of the siege. For example, in 1948, Lev Rakov harshly criticized his own research staff members in his reviews of their articles for the "excessively excited tone" that caused the narrative to "sound falsely." Rakov wrote that their narratives of the events about "the feats of Russian warriors" revive the "worst traditions of the pseudo-patriotic literature" from the Russo-Japanese war era which in turn "profanes the great defense of Leningrad."[72]

Besides his extraordinary managerial and administrative abilities, Lev Rakov, trained as a Marxist historian and with the experience of a Hermitage administrator, was able to successfully navigate through the ideological issues and complaints from the people described by museum tour guide and memoirist Nina Nonina as "grey personalities with empty eyes and souls." After receiving a complaint from another staff member about Nonina's negligence due to a brief tour that she gave to a rushing British admiral that could turn into an accusation of ideological flaws, Rakov argued that Vladimir Lenin once gave a 15 minute speech at a University, and no one can accuse Lenin of negligence![73]

[72] Yulia Buianova cites Rakov's reviews in *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 88.
[73] Nonina, *Rekviem*, 45-47.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of creating the exhibition and then the museum were the purely material constraints and conditions in the wartime city with the half-starved staff, all of whom lost someone or everyone during the siege and barely survived it themselves. "Each and every one of us," wrote staff member Nina Khudiakova who lost seven family members during the siege, "had their own personal tragedy in this hardest time."[74] In this sense, the creation of the exhibition provided its organizers with a therapeutical opportunity to narrate their shared stories of loss and destruction, survival and resilience, and to construct something meaningful in the midst of death and destruction. "When we began the work," wrote Rakov in an article about the museums' artists which was published only in 1973, "the city was still besieged. Artillery shelling continued, and oftentimes we were worried about the fates of our comrades, delayed on their way by an air raid alert. But we were confident that we would soon celebrate a victory on our front and the day, when defense of Leningrad becomes a glorious page of history, is near."[75] History is written by the victors and the establishment of the exhibition before the end of the war was meant to do just that, write the history from the position of the moral and military victory.

Lev Rakov continued to develop the museum, working on transforming it into a permanent institution in 1946 and beyond, as discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, he organized two exhibitions close to his own research interests at the House of the Red Army: Russian Military Book (1945) and Russian Military Uniform (1946). In 1947 the party assigned him to organize a large exhibition devoted to the successes of Leningrad Industry. In the same year he was appointed to one of the highest positions for a cultural manager in Leningrad; he became the director of the

[74] Khudiakova, 98.
[75] Rakov, "Vystavka 'Oborona Leningrada'," in *Khudozhniki goroda-fronta* (Leningrad, 1973), 399.

State Public Library, while continuing his work in the Museum of the Defense as the head of the military section.

***The Public Library, the Terror in Leningrad, and Second Imprisonment***

By the time of Rakov's appointment as the director of the Public Library in May 1947, the ideological campaigns of late Stalinism were unleashed. These campaigns, argued historian Juliane Fürst, "clustered around a vague notion of anti-Westernness, anti-intelligentsia and anti-Semitism. Post-war campaigns, in contrast to pre-war campaigns, were highly ambiguous, couched in incomprehensible and intransparent terms and left wide open to interpretation."[76] The first signal of an upcoming disaster for Leningrad's intelligentsia was the August 14, 1946 Central Committee's decree, personally initiated by Stalin, that attacked *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* journals and in particular poet Anna Akhmatova and satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko.[77] Zhdanov, who did not initiate the campaign but quickly joined it, followed with the speech "On the Errors of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*," first published on September 21, 1946, in which he personally insulted Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, and criticized the writers and artists for "bowing before foreign influences."[78] Zhdanov emphasized that "the TsK of the Party wants the Leningrad activists and the Leningrad writers to understand well that the time has come when it is necessary to raise our ideological work

[76] Juliane Fürst, "Introduction: Late Stalinist society: history, policies and people," in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (Routledge, 2006), 9.

[77] About the impact of the decree on the Soviet culture see Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, 127-180. Stephen Lovell argues that "Stalin kept his associates in their place by humiliating them from time to time, and also retained for himself the right to intervene with decisive effect on any issue." *The Shadow of War: Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the Present* (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 34. Stalin's direct attack on Leningrad's main journals was an example of such humiliation against Zhdanov. Also see "Introduction: The Culture of Late Stalinism, 1941–1953," in *Soviet Culture and Power: a History in Documents*, 350.

[78] Kees Boterbloem, *Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896-1948* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 279-283. V.A. Kutuzov, "A. A. Zhdanov i postanovlenie T͡sK VKP(b) o zhurnalakh Zvezda I Leningrad," *Noveĭshaĭa istorii͡a Rossii*, no. 1 (2011): 46 –152.

to a high level."[79] Akhmatova and Zoshchenko were subsequently expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union and deprived of their ration cards.

The complex and nuanced nature of Soviet terror, which, in the words of Christian Gerlach and Nicolas Werth, "appears not to have been a single phenomenon, not one uniform policy fueled exclusively by ideology, but rather a number of interrelated repressive lines and policies, divergent in scope, character, and intensity; implemented through legal and extralegal means; and aimed at different categories of 'enemies'"[80] produced a society where nobody could feel safe. In this atmosphere of societal anxiety and aggression, Rakov became a director of one of the biggest cultural institutions in the city, and therefore, one of the most controlled by the ideological Leviathan that, led by Andrei Zhdanov, conducted a "broadly based ideological offensive to restore firm control over the arts and inculcate political orthodoxy into the general Soviet population."[81] At this job Rakov was able to once again employ his managerial and organizational talents, succeeding in a few projects crucial for a library that was catastrophically lacking space, new literature, staff, paper, and also required major renovation after the war. In 1949, Rakov managed to secure a new building for the library on the Fontanka River which became his most important legacy in this position.[82]

At the Public Library he befriended his former student Daniil Alshits, an historian of the Ivan the Terrible era, who was at first a graduate student at the library, and later was hired by Rakov as a bibliographer. Alshits's dissertation was devoted to the edits that Ivan the Terrible

[79] Andrei Zhdanov, *Essays on Literature, Philosophy, and Music* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 15-45.
[80] Michael Geyer, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York, 2009), 149.
[81] Kees Boterbloem, *Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov*, 274.
[82] About Rakov at the Public Library see I. G. Lander, "Lev L′vovich Rakov, 1947-1950," in *Istoriia Biblioteki v biografiiakh ee direktorov, 1795—2005* (Saint-Petersburg, 2006), 381-390.

made for the historical chronicle of his own rule. "No one could have foreseen the crushing power of this avalanche," wrote Alshits in his Gulag memoir about the years immediately predating 1949, "which was about to fall on our long-suffering city. But, as always before the storm, the inevitability of it was felt quite clearly. Now, from the distance of time, it is clearly visible that the attack at the Leningrad magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* was, in essence, the beginning of the Leningrad Affair."[83] By 1949, the storm indeed was inevitable for both Rakov and Alshitz.

According to Mikhail Glinka, Lev Rakov told him about Beria's visit to the Museum of the Defense in the late fall of 1948:

> MGB Officers, explaining nothing, brought him to the museum, and a little while later arrived Beria. Rakov's clothing was searched, and he was ordered to follow the minister, two steps behind. […] Beria slowly walked through the whole exposition, stopping only by the shell casings and discharged bombs. His pince-nez sparkled. Without saying a word, he left the museum.[84]

With the beginning of the Leningrad Affair in February 1949, the fall of the museum's patron Alexei Kuznetsov, and the subsequent developments discussed in the previous chapter, Rakov knew that his own fate was in serious jeopardy.

In the meantime, he was still the director at the Public Library. The library was under continuous ideological audits and attacks that began in 1948 in the libraries around the Union and intensified in 1949 with the anti-cosmopolitan campaign against anything foreign and "unpatriotic." In April 1949, a commission from the RSFSR Council of Ministers found that "the work of the most important departments of the Library […] is not adequate to the requirements of the party in the field of ideological work. Directorate of the library did not pay enough attention to the issues of service and underestimated political significance of the library catalogues and

[83] Daniil Alshits, *Horosho posideli!* (Saint-Petersburg, 2010), 13.
[84] Mikhail Glinka, "Chelovek na koleniakh," *Neva*, no 3, (1989), 147.

reference bibliography."[85] While the directorate and staff could fix certain issues that related to the service of the library patrons, the apolitical catalogues, or take measures to strengthen the "propaganda of the Soviet book," the biggest issue for the party apparatchiks was the people employed at the library, who were deemed to be under the influences of "objectivist and formalist ideas." The commission ordered Rakov to "strengthen the most important departments of the library with highly qualified staff members well-versed in the Marxist-Leninist theory."[86] In August 1949, the library received an order to conduct the attestation of the qualifications (*attestivat*') of all library staff with a detailed instruction on how to cleanse the library from ideologically foreign elements.[87] In the three months between October 1949 and January 1950, 52 people were fired from the library and 109 were demoted to lower positions; the vast majority of these staff members did not pass the "attestation" on ideological grounds.[88] Several library workers were arrested.

In the fall of 1949, Rakov called up Alshits to his office and told him that he is being pressured to fire him. Rakov asked Alshits to resign prompting the latter to realize that his arrest was nearing. Alshits deliberated as he felt that his resignation would somehow help Rakov, but eventually decided against it:

> To file a letter of resignation would mean giving a favor to all these guardians of the state security, plentiful among the library staff. Besides, it would mean that I myself feel guilty about something, […] rushing to run away from the place where I committed my crimes. All of these feelings were mixed with the bitterness of resentment for an undeserved exile. At the same time, I sympathized with Lev Lvovich Rakov with all my heart. He looked pitiful. I understood that it was very difficult for him at that moment. They were already

[85] GARF, f. A-534, op. 1, d. 88, l. 12-14. Cited in A. L. Divnogorstev, ed. *Bibliotechnoe delo v Rossiĭskoĭ Federat͡sii v poslevoennyĭ period: iiun' 1945 - mart 1953: dokumenty i materialy*. Tom 1 (Moscow, 2005), 196-197.
[86] Ibid., 197-199.
[87] G.V. Mikheeva, "Predislovie," in *Sotrudniki Rossiĭskoĭ nat͡sional'noĭ biblioteki: dei͡ateli nauki i kul'tury: biograficheskiĭ slovar'*, vol. 4, ed. by G.V. Mikheeva, et.al (St. Petersburg, 2013), 20.
[88] Ibid.

making a case against him as a founder and first director of the Leningrad Defense Museum.[89]

Rakov did not fire Alshits, who was arrested on December 6, 1949 on the charges of anti-Soviet propaganda in his dissertation about Ivan the Terrible. In June 1950, Alshits was sentenced to 10 years in the Gulag.

Unlike the Great Terror of the 1930s, the methods of terror during late Stalinism, and especially of its ideological campaigns, were more procedural, which in turn led to a long period when a doomed person was first publicly criticized at their work place, then fired and expelled from the party (if applicable), and only then arrested and charged. In turn, this approach that turned investigated people into societal pariahs, led to the atmosphere of absolute fear and universal societal involvement in the campaigns, as described in Yury Trifonov's novel *The House on the Embankment.* Generally speaking, public discussions, or more precisely, scoldings, were an important tool of ideological and political control over the population, functioning as a cynical and perverted parody on the democratic process where the accused had to perform self-criticism in front of their colleagues and sometimes a wider audience who, in turn, were also supposed to criticize the victim.[90] The Stalinist regime widely used this tool during the ideological campaigns of its last years; as in the words of Juliane Fürst, behind these campaigns laid "the Soviet regime's desire to bring order to the post-war ideological world, which had acquired a worrying amount of

[89] Alshits, *Horosho posideli!*, 23.

[90] Serhy Yekelchuk theorizes that the participation of Soviet citizens in "state-approved social and political practices" was the only way for the government to verify their allegiance. *Stalin's Citizens: Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4. Elena Zubkova, on the other hand, argues that the role of the postwar terror was to paralyze "the capacity to think freely and to analyze a social situation critically," and to form a necessary atmosphere of intimidation." The attacks on dissent, that had a "prophylactic function" had two forms: court of honor and creative discussion. *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 118-119. Also see Oleg Khorokhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, 1999).

parallel discourse. Ultimately, the campaigns were designed to gain or regain control of this most elusive entity of Soviet life – the Soviet mind."[91]

In the meantime, Rakov's case was spinning on the highest level. The *gorkom* commission headed by the new party boss V.M. Andrianov on October 19, 1949 found him personally responsible for the dangerous exposition of the Museum, recommending to expel him from the party and fire him from the library. The library then had its own assembly on October 27, which ended up in the following characterization of the doomed director, far from a harsh condemnation: "Rakov is a cultural and initiative worker with great organizational abilities, from a family of the old Petersburg intelligentsia, grew up among qualified Leningrad intelligentsia. […] Rakov paid a lot of attention to the organizational issues, and as a result of it the Library is receiving a new building." The report, however, contained the absurd but required critique of Rakov's personnel policy, as he "hired staff based on their professional abilities, rather than the party factor."[92] In the next month Rakov was placed on administrative leave and subsequently expelled from the party.

Rakov began working as a maker of scale models. He was officially fired from the library on March 1, 1950 and arrested the following month on April 20 on charges of betraying the homeland and anti-Soviet propaganda. Rakov, along with other accused in the Leningrad affair, was transferred to Moscow's Lefortovo prison for the whole length of "investigation," the nature of which he described in a 1953 petition to the Presidium of the TsK VKP(b):

> The interrogator started hitting me in the face during the very first interrogation and hit me during most of the others. Threats (including the threats about the fate of my twelve-year-old daughter) and bullying were endless and constant. Needless to say, I couldn't write anything I wanted to. For months, my sleep was limited to 2-2.5 hours a day. For three days - 120 hours - I did not sleep for one minute, being put only in underwear in a cold punishment cell of Lefortovo.

[91] Juliane Fürst, "Introduction," 9.
[92] Lander, "Lev L′vovich Rakov, 388.

The whole Leningrad case was controlled by Stalin, who received reports from the MGB head Abakumov and personally confirmed or sometimes changed the suggested sentences, that included death penalties or long prison terms.[93] The main group of the accused, that included A. A. Kuznetsov, P.S. Popkov, N. A. Voznesensky, Ya. F. Kapustin, and five other people were sentenced in the closed trial without "participation of the sides" (defense and prosecutor). The trial with an audience of 120 top party activists was staged at Leningrad's House of the Officers on September 29-30.[94] Among other accusations, the indictment included "falsification of history of defense of Leningrad," "lying to the Leningraders and hiding from them the leading role of the TsK VKP(b) in defense of Leningrad," etc. The Museum of the Defense was specifically mentioned in the indictment:

> Even the Leningrad Museum of the Defense, dedicated to the feats of the workers and troops of the Leningrad front, was adapted to please KUZNETSOV, POPKOV, KAPUSTIN and their accomplices and was used by them for criminal purposes, to conceal the organizing and the leading role of the TsK VKP(b), to deceive and conceal the historical facts and documents that demonstrated that the entire Soviet people, under the leadership of the party and government, took part in the liberation of Leningrad from the blockade during the Great Patriotic War. The museum was turned by the members of the enemy group into a means of self-promotion and costed the state several million rubles.[95]

Six of the nine received death penalties and were executed an hour later.

Rakov's name was on Abakumov's second list of 38 accused people with the suggested sentences, which Stalin approved on October 24, 1950.[96] Twenty people from that list were

[93] The death penalty was abolished in the USSR in 1947 and reinstated in January, 1950 in advance of the fabricated trials of the Leningrad Affair.

[94] L.A. Voznesensky, *Istiny radi…* (Moscow, 2004), 233.

[95] Kirill Boldovskiĭ and David Brandenberger, "Obvinitel′noe zakl͡iuchenie "Leningradskogo dela": kontekst i analiz soderzhaniia," *Noveĭshaia istoriia Rossii*, vol. 9 (no. 4, 2019), 1004. The scholars cite the indictment from the copy in the Library of Congress collection of Dmitriĭ Antonovich Volkogonov Papers. Most documents of the Leningrad Affair are still unavailable for the researchers; many were destroyed by Malenkov.

[96] Voznesensky, *Istiny radi…,* 243.

sentenced to death.[97] On October 28, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union, hastily read Rakov his sentence: 25 years of imprisonment and confiscation of all property. Rakov's wife Marina Fonton, whom he had officially married only in 1950 in advance of his arrest, was arrested following his verdict and sentenced to eight years in exile in Kazakhstan, as a wife of the "enemy of the people." In remote Kokshetau, Fonton lived with the family of Filipp Mikheev, an apparatchik who was also prosecuted in the Leningrad Affair.[98] The exile of the family members from Leningrad was specifically requested by V.M. Andrianov in his letter to Stalin, following the practice of cleansing the city from any potential dissent.[99]

After 6 months of torturous "investigation" that included broken teeth, Rakov served his sentence in the infamous Vladimir Central prison of maximum security. In prison he befriended his cell mates, the poet-mystic Daniil Andreev (1906-1959)[100] and physiologist, academician Vasily Parin (1903-1971), who after his release became the main Soviet specialist in space medicine. Together they secretly wrote *The Newest Plutarch* - a humorous pseudo-encyclopedia about fictional historical figures that Rakov also illustrated.[101] The idea of the book was inspired by Mikhail Kuzmin's planned series of historical biographies *New Plutarch* (he only published

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[97] The total number of people purged in the Leningrad affair is unclear. In a December 10, 1953 report to Khrushchev, MVD minister S.N. Kruglov and his deputy I.A. Serov gave a number of 214 people total sentenced to various prison terms, exile, and the death penalty; 69 were the "main figures," and 145 were their relatives; the number of sentenced to the death penalty was 23. Additionally, Kruglov reported that two people died in prison before sentencing. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 3289, l. 63–6, cited in A. Artizov, ed., *Reabilitacija: kak ėto bylo: dokumenty Prezidiuma CK KPSS i drugie materialy*. Tom 1 (Moscow, 2000), 74-75. However, Kruglov report shows a discrepancy in the number of the executed (23), which is incomplete; in the first, main list there were 6 executed, and in October 24th list there were 20.

[98] See the memoirs of Filipp Mikheev's son, Valerii Mikheev, about their exile and Marina Fonton, "Vospominaniia Valeriia Filippovicha Mikheeva," in *Sud'by liudeĭ: "Leningradskoe delo" ed.* A. M. Kulegin and Smirnov, A. P. (St. Petersburg, 2009), 96-114.

[99] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 66, l. 125. Cited in Haustov, Vladimir Nikolaevič, ed., et al, *Lubânka: Stalin i MGB SSSR, mart 1946-mart 1953: Dokumenty vysših organov partijnoj i gosudarstvennoj vlasti* (Moscow, 2007), 314.

[100] About Andreev see Daniel H. Shubin, *Leonid and Alla Andreev* (2015); Mikhail Epstein, "Daniil Andreev and the Mysticism of Femininity," in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal Ithaca (New York, Cornell University Press: 1997), 325-357.

[101] D.L. Andreev, V.V. Parin, and L.L. Rakov, *Noveiishii Plutarch* (Moscow, 1991).

one issue devoted to Count Cagliostro in 1919). Rakov also wrote a story about Evgeny Onegin and began writing a research paper about Nikolai Gogol. From the prison he wrote to his daughter (Stalin's death led to some improvement in prison conditions, and the inmates were now allowed correspondence), about regretting his career that led him to jail and took time away from his real passions: "I very much regret that I spent life on different organizational jobs, which bring nothing that lasts (and sometimes bring misfortunes). I should have written and drawn" (December 1953);[102] "Now I understand that I should have written about Russian history and literature and drawn, rather than spending my time on various busy jobs," (March 1954);[103] "If I return back to life, I will continue working on these things that are maybe useless, but certainly much more interesting than what I was able to publish, what I gave lectures and reports about" (May 1954).[104]

Lev Rakov was released from prison in May 1954 as a result of Khrushchev's campaign of rehabilitation of the people convicted during the Leningrad Affair.[105] The rehabilitated were to receive housing, monetary compensation, and jobs. Marina Fonton was released from exile a few weeks earlier, in March 1954. In 1955-1962, Rakov served as a director of the library of the Academy of Arts, where he began writing a large work on the history of the Russian military uniform, which was left unpublished and unfinished before his death. He also became a successful playwright, as he and Daniil Alshits, released from the Gulag in 1955, co-authored two comedy plays, that were put on in Nikolai Akimov's Leningrad Comedy Theater; Rakov knew Akimov

[102] Rakov, "Pis'ma," 365-366.
[103] Ibid., 367.
[104] Ibid., 369.
[105] Artizov, *Reabilitacija*, 115-142. About the dismantle of Gulag and experiences of former inmates see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

since the 1920s as both were friends with Mikhail Kuzmin. Rakov died in 1971 without witnessing the rehabilitation of his purged Museum of the Defense of Leningrad.

***An Interlude. Historians, the Siege, Anti-Semitism, and the Leningrad Affair***

Lev Rakov was far from being the only one who was punished for taking part in the documentation of the siege. In this section of the chapter, I will investigate how the state prosecuted other historians, namely Mikhail Rabinovich and Sergei Avvakumov, associates of Lev Rakov, whose charges related to the history of the siege. Their cases demonstrate that the MGB (curated by Beria) began preparing purges against the historians of the siege in 1948, well before the start of the Leningrad Affair. In turn, it adds to the evidence that shows that the Leningrad Affair and its effects should be examined in the broader context of the ideological and political terror campaigns of late Stalinism that began in 1946.

To fully understand the role of city historians in the commemoration and documentation of the siege, we need to go back to the beginning of the war. Sometime in 1942, members of the Commission of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences for Leningrad Institutions (the commission existed between November 1941 and April 1942) wrote a letter to Leningrad's *gorkom* requesting the creation of a committee that would collect the materials for the subsequent writing of the history of Leningrad's defense. Academicians argued that:

> For eight months of the second Patriotic War the city of Lenin has already managed to write more than one brilliant page in history. The heroic defense of Leningrad from the German fascist hordes, the selfless labor of Leningrad workers for the needs of the defense, the unheard-of suffering from hunger, bombs and shells, tolerated by the population of the besieged city with the courage and steadfastness, all of it presents the most valuable material of exceptional value for a historian. The full history of the great war of liberation, of course, will not be written now and not immediately, [...] but it is necessary to begin this work right now, immediately, by the hands of contemporaries and participants of the war, because only this guarantees the completeness and value of the collected material. The

> history of Leningrad in the era of the second Patriotic War will be one of the most important and largest chapters of the general history of our era. [...][106]

The city's historians, namely the employees of the Leningrad's Institute of History of the All-Union Communist Party (Istpart) under the supervision of its director Sergei Avvakumov[107] began to collect the materials on the siege as early as 1942. The Istpart's efforts resulted in the first publications of the documents and materials on the history of the siege.[108] Upon the request of the academics, the Leningrad party leadership formed the committee only in April 1943; it was dominated not by historians, but by the party apparatchiks and ideologists. The goal of the committee was also changed from the academics' request of "writing the history" to a narrower goal of creating the "chronicle of Leningrad's and Leningrad Oblast's fight against the German fascist invaders."[109]

Mikhail Rabinovich, who in January 1942 met Rakov and thought that he also would like to work according to his historical profession, in the fall of 1943 was transferred to the Leningrad Front Staff where he began working as an assistant to the head of the Department of Using the Experience of War. His boss was colonel Liushkovskii, a military historian, already familiar to us from his work with Rakov on organization of the 1938 military exhibition at the Hermitage. Sometime after the lifting of the siege, Liushkovskii ordered Rabinovich to write a sample weekly chronicle of the battles at the Leningrad front:

> I gladly took this job, completed it on time and submitted it. A few weeks later, I learned that my chronicle turned out to be the best and was taken as a model. In short, I was

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[106] A.R. Dzeniskevich, "O sozdanii obshhegorodskoj komissii po sboru materialov dlja istorii oborony Leningrada," in *Leningradskaja nauka v gody Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny* (Saint-Petersburg, 1995), 131-132.

[107] Sergei Iosifovich Avvakumov (1894-1962) – historian of the Communist Party, at different times was a head of the LOII, Istpart, Museum of the Defense and served as Deputy Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the City Committee of the Party.

[108] S. I. Avvakumov, ed., *Leningrad v Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojne Sovetskogo Sojuza. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*. Leningrad.: Gospolitizdat, v.1 1944, v.2 1947.

[109] Dzeniskevich, "O sozdanii obshhegorodskoj komissii," 134-136; About the commission also see Peri, *The War Within*, 241-242, 250-251; Ganzenmüller, *Osaždennyj Leningrad*, 416-419.

> assigned this work, which I had to perform not neglecting my official duties. I took up a chronicle, which I did, I repeat, with pleasure - after all, this kind of work was almost my profession. As I was finishing parts of the chronicle I was handing them over to the Institute of Party History, where S.I. Avvakumov worked as a director. The Institute signed a contract with me, and I worked until demobilization and even later, using the remaining materials. The consequences were unexpected and sad.[110]

The contract, signed by Avvakumov and Rabinovich on May 5th, 1944, stipulated that the chronicle must be written on the materials of the Leningrad Front Staff, and copies of the chronicles were to be sent to the Istpart and the Front Staff. The last part of work submitted by Rabinovich was done two years later, in May 1946.[111] In the meantime, Rabinovich was about to return to his work as a professor at the LGU, which returned to Leningrad from evacuation. At the end of February 1945, he went to Moscow to be demobilized from the army, not expecting any complications. However, Rabinovich encountered issues at the Ministry of Education:

> They did not want to appoint me to Leningrad, to the University, instead they kept offering different educational institutions in the province. At the same time, beautiful words were spoken about the lack of staff, about the duty to help provincial educational institutions, about the patriotism of such an act, and so on, as if staying at the front was not sufficient to confirm patriotism, etc. […] It turned out that at the front, where this was not obvious, I did not know anything about the so-called "Shcherbakovshina," about the manifestations of anti-Semitism, that was then still concealed behind various camouflage.[112]
>
> […] I had to face such phenomena soon again, and it was on a much larger and more open scale. Many years later this became the norm everyone was used to and that was perceived as a matter of fact, as something natural.[113]

Nina Nonina, whose (Jewish) husband and brother died during the defense of Leningrad, bitterly noted that she "did not know a single Jewish family without those who went to the war or

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[110] Rabinovich, *Vospominanija dolgoj zhizni*, 236.

[111] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4000, op.1, d. 259.

[112] Aleksandr S. Shcherbakov (1901–1945), was a founding member of the Soviet Writers' Union, along with Maxim Gorky, and a prominent party apparatchik. During the war Shcherbakov served as the head of the political directorate of the Red Army and was a director of the Soviet Information Bureau. On these positions, Shcherbakov implemented certain anti-Semitic policies, such as "cleansing" the main Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* of its Jewish management, which was followed by similar tactics in many Soviet journals, newspapers and other cultural and educational institutions. See Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov". Vlast' i evrejskaja intelligencija v SSSR,* (Moscow, 2010), 94-107.

[113] Rabinovich, ibid., 238-239.

died." She recounted that at the Museum there were documents of only three killed Jews on display, including her brother Vladimir Nonin.[114] According to Nonina, "every commission ordered to remove them from display. Lev Lvovich [Rakov], a Russian *intelligent,* despite the danger of incurring problems upon himself, defended these three all the time."[115] The beginning of the open anti-Semitic attacks on the intelligentsia coincided with the start of the Leningrad Affair, which made the atmosphere in the city especially gruesome. For example, by summer 1949 classicist Solomon Lurie was accused of subservience to foreign scholarship and was fired both from the Leningrad Institute of History[116] and, most importantly, from the Leningrad University, where he was a professor. [117] Answering the question "When was it most bitter?" Lurie's son and author of his biography Yakov S. Lurie argued that "the Apocalypse of 1949-53 was inferior to the Apocalypse of 1937-39 on the scale of arrests; but the moral atmosphere was no less, but, perhaps, even heavier."[118] The ability to discriminate at the workplace was perhaps the most effective and wide-spread tactic of the anti-Semitic campaign, since unemployment meant quite literal hunger in USSR at that time. [119]

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[114] After Vladimir's death at the Leningrad battle in January 1944 at the age on 20, Nonina visited Olga Berggol'ts and pleaded her to write a poem about her brother. Berggol'ts answered her request and composed "Pamyati Zashitnikov" (In Memory of the Defensemen) in which she wrote about grieving sister's visit and her brother's tragic fate.

[115] Nonina, *Rekviem*, 64-65.

[116] About the Institute, see: Kirill Boldovskij, "'LOII ne sumelo perestroit' svoju rabotu…': Postanovlenie bjuro LGK VKP(b) i drugie dokumenty o rabote LOII 1949 g." *Peterburgskij istoricheskij zhurnal.* 2015. № 1. 228–242; Viktor Moiseevich Paneiakh "Uprazdnenie Leningradskogo otdelenija Instituta istorii AN SSSR v 1953 godu" V*oprosy istorii* (1993, no. 10), 19–27. The Leningrad Institute of History went through a series of attacks between 1949 and 1953, when the Institute was temporary abolished, which, according to Paneiakh, was a culmination of attacks at the Leningrad school of history.

[117] Solomon Yakovlevich Lurie (1890-1964) – professor at the Leningrad University in 1934 - 1941, 1943 – 1949; after his dismissal from the University Lurie moved to Odessa to teach Latin and Linguistics at the Institute of the Foreign Languages (1950-1953) and then to Lviv, where he served as a Professor at the Lviv University's Department of Classical Philology until his death. Author of the book *Anti-Semitism v drevnem mire* (Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World*), 1922* and many works on Greek science.

[118] Koprzhiva-Luria, *Istorija odnoj zhizni*, 206-207.

[119] See Kostyrchenko, *Vlast' protiv "kosmopolitov,"* 210-232 on mechanics of the cleansings. Kostyrchenko explains the "paradoxal and dead-end" nature of the policy: "during tsarist times Jews could escape the persecution by converting to Christianity or emigrating, but during Stalin's rule they were deprived of even these options" (218).

In the fall of 1948, Rabinovich was apprehended by the MGB (successor of NKVD), questioned in a series of interrogations, and ordered to submit his copy of the chronicle. Worried about the potential danger, Rabinovich notified Liushkovskii of possible issues advising him to destroy any potentially sensitive materials. In spring 1949, the interrogations, now at the Military Prosecution office, continued and ended in his arrest. On May 19, 1949, the military court sentenced Rabinovich to eight years in the Gulag on charges of "military crimes" and "divulging of state and military secrets."[120] Both Avvakumov and Liushkovskii were called as witnesses. Avvakumov, who "already stood on the edge of the abyss" gave an honest testimony, telling the court that Rabinovich performed the task in accordance with the orders from the Leningrad's party committee and upon the knowledge of the Leningrad's Front Headquarters and personally Liushkovskii.[121] The latter, however, denied his involvement and betrayed his former subordinate:

> His testimony was more like an accusatory speech, the purpose of which was to whitewash himself, without any hesitation. Suffice it to mention just one phrase from his speech: Rabinovich "sold his homeland for thirty pieces of silver." The presiding judge turned to me: what can I say in connection with the testimony of the witness Liushkovski? I said: "Let it remain on his conscience." I blurted out these words unexpectedly to myself, but I believe that I did the right thing, not descending to the same level as the scared colonel. [122]

Sergei Avvakumov, indeed, was on the edge of the abyss and was arrested the following month. Fired from his job as director of the Leningrad Institute of History (LOII) and excluded from the party in January 1949, his fall was predetermined even before the beginning of the Leningrad Affair. His case was related to the fabricated charges against the old revolutionary Georgiĭ Leonidovich Shidlovskiĭ, employed at LOII. Shidlovskiĭ was accused in betraying Stalin

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Similar sentiment in Shaporina's diary: "Now Jews believe that the laws related to the Jewish questions were much better during the old regime at the very least since there were officially known." Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, 185.

[120] "Rabinovich Moiseĭ Berkovich," Iofe Fund Digital Archive, accessed July 20, 2022, https://arch2.iofe.center/case/1741

[121] Rabinovich, *Vospominanij*a, 273.

[122] Ibid.

to the tsarist secret police back in 1913. The accusations against Avvakumov were spun by the head of MGB Dmitri Rodionov, who was appointed to this position in 1946; among his best professional qualities was detailed reporting of everything happening in Leningrad to Beria and Stalin.

A civil-war veteran, a party member since 1920, and an esteemed propagandist, Avvakumov was expelled from the party upon "suggestion" of Pyotr Popkov, who argued that Avvakumov conducted wrong personnel politics at the Istpart and was "insincere with the party."[123] The fall of Popkov in February 1949 did not help Avvakumov; the new city leadership, continued the case against him, but now as a part of the Leningrad Affair against the "Kuznetsov-Popkov group." After a long "investigation" that included 200 interrogations, cold punishment cell, sleep deprivation, and other torture, on December 16, 1950 Avvakumov was sentenced to 25 years in the Gulag on the charges of "assisting subversion of the Kuznetsov-Popkov party group, impurity of the personnel at the Leningrad Institute of Party History and anti-Soviet propaganda." Among the specific accusations against Avvakumov were the "glorification of Kuznetsov and Popkov" in the edited book *Heroic Leningrad* and journal *Propaganda and Agitation*, that contained photos of the disgraced leaders and articles authored by them.[124]

In April 1951 his wife and two sons, both of whom served in the war, were exiled to Kazakhstan for five years. Avvakumov's family were released from exile and allowed to return to Leningrad shorty after Stalin's death because of the so-called Beria's amnesty.[125] Avvakumov, however, was still in the Gulag. In February 1954 he petitioned Nikita Khrushchev for a retrial, professing his loyalty to the party:

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[123] Kulegin and Smirnov, *Sud'by liudeĭ*, 87-88.

[124] Ibid., 90.

[125] The amnesty order was initiated by Beria and was issued by the Presidium of the TsK VKP (b) on March 27, three weeks after Stalin's death. Artizov, *Reabilitacija*, 15-18.

> I never hid anything from the party. Served the case of the party as well as I could. I realize my fault in losing revolutionary vigilance, in rotten liberalism, political carelessness and negligence. But I was never an enemy to the party and Soviet power. I have been imprisoned for five years. In the hardest days of imprisonment I did not lose faith that the decision about my case would be revised. This faith saved me from a mental breakdown and from suicide (there were such thoughts). I learned to be patient. Russian person, as is known, is very patient. Yet, humanly speaking, maybe it is enough?[126]

Sergei Avvakumov was rehabilitated and released from the camp in July 1954; he returned to Leningrad. After a lengthy medical treatment he was hired at LOII in a humiliating junior rank, albeit he managed to return to a position of leadership a few years later when he became a head of the section of the history of the Soviet society.[127] His 1963 obituary described his career path in detail, but mentioned nothing of the professional gap between 1949 and 1955 leaving the interpretation to an attentive reader.[128]

Mikhail Rabinovich was amnestied in April 1953. He was unable to return to his previous workplace at Leningrad State University as he was not yet rehabilitated and faced many employment-related issues in other institutions, largely due to the anti-Semitic policies. His memoir that included his time in the Gulag was published in 1996, a year before he passed away.

***Conclusion***

This chapter investigated the life and career of a truly remarkable person, the first director of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, Lev Rakov, with an excursus to the fates of two of his associates: Sergey Avvakumov and Mikhail Rabinovich. Rakov's interests, skills, and initiative, his deep love for Leningrad, and his ability to manage a large team of talented specialists, made the museum a truly exceptional institution. The biggest testimony to the impact and

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Dobson demonstrates how the rehabilitated people frequently had to petition to receive help with employment, housing, and pensions and that some regions, in particular Leningrad, were hostile to the returned. Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, ch.2, 50-79.

[128] "Sergeĭ Iosifovich Avvakumov," in *Rabochie Leningrada v bor'be za pobedu sot͡sializma. Trudy LOII,* issue 6. (Moscow; Leningrad, 1963): 357-359.

impression that the museum had made on its visitors was a large grassroots campaign for its revival that unfolded during Perestroika and resulted in the establishment of the modern State Memorial Museum of the Defense and Siege of Leningrad in 1989.[129]

All three historians repressed in 1949-1950, Rakov, Avvakumov and Rabinovich, were punished due to their direct involvement in the commemoration and history of the siege. Honest scholarship about the war was made impossible by the June 9, 1947 state order "On liability for disclosure of state secrets and for the loss of documents containing state secrets."[130] Applied retroactively, the order led to the criminal charges again Mikhail Rabinovich. The order classified everything related to the war and "books, articles which named the detachments and their locations, which had been published for two years without any issues, were now placed in the special storages of libraries."[131] In the (unsigned) report to Stalin, the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, among other things, was accused in "exhibiting secret documents, that disclosed operative-tactical plans of our commandment, dislocation of the Soviet troops and their maneuvers, demonstrated secret weaponry."[132]

The result of these developments, including the closure of the museum, destruction of documents, and restriction of archival access, was a long-lasting interruption of the scholarship of the siege. The author of the most comprehensive military history of the siege, David M. Glantz, noted that since the end of the war historians treated the military operations around Leningrad as "a mere sideshow to more momentous operations occurring elsewhere along the Soviet-German front," instead focusing on Leningrad's defense "symbolic significance" and its population's

[129] See the interview of Ol'ga Il'inichna Markhaeva in Simmons and Perlina. *Writing the siege of Leningrad*, 170-173.
[130] *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Soi͡uza Sovetskikh Sot͡sialisticheskikh Respublik*, № 20 (474). 16 June 1947. 1.
[131] Rabinovich, *Vospominaniia*, 249.
[132] RGASPI, f. 17 op. 118, d. 673, l. 29-32.

heroic resistance. "While these factors were important," argued Glantz, "so also were the military operations that took place in the region. […] The sad fact is that many military operations the Red Army conducted in the Leningrad region have remained obscure or even forgotten because they failed, often spectacularly, and, for a variety of reasons, Soviet historian have not dwelled on failed operations in any sector."[133] It is not due to neglect of the Soviet historians that the first history of the siege was written by an American Harrison Salisbury in 1969, but because of the strict control imposed on scholarship in the first post-war years.

Another impactful effect of the late Stalinist terror in Leningrad was a double trauma that the intelligentsia endured of the deadly siege itself, and of the totalitarian crackdown that followed. This trauma is examined in this chapter and in the next one, which is focuses on the artists who created the Museum of the Defense. The result of this trauma was multifold. First, it fed the dissident movement including the Jewish refuseniks.[134] Second, as the intelligentsia, and especially its smaller layer of public intellectuals, are crucial in forming historical memory, it contributed to the narrative of Leningrad's valor and victimhood and its special identity separate from the USSR that blossomed during Perestroika. Third, resultant from the second as well as from the disruption of the siege scholarship, it further muddled societal comprehension of the already sensitive and complex topic of the blockade, as it was complicated by the added layer of victimhood of the city's wartime leadership.

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[133] David M. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad*, 467.

[134] Israeli historian Michael Beizer, a born Leningrader and refusenik himself, argued that "When ideals of communism and internationalism became compromised in the minds of young people, their place was taken by Zionism and loyalty to the Jewish people." "Evrejskoe Nacional'noe Dvizhenie v SSSR 1960–1980-h Gg.:Prichiny, Istoki i Sushhnost'," in *Istorija Evrejskogo Naroda v Rossii. Ot Revoljucij 1917 Goda Do Raspada Sovetskogo Sojuza*, ed. Michael Beyzer (Moscow: Mosty kultury/Gesharim, 2017), 324.

## Chapter V. The Art of Survival in the Time of War and Terror: Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya

"Be Russian artists."

Kazimir Malevich to his disciples.

### *Introduction*

While Lev Rakov was responsible for building the narrative of the museum and its collection, it was unforgettable to those who visited it largely due to the unique design solutions that turned the damaged buildings of the Salt Town into a grand museum-memorial. The principal artist of the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" was Nikolai Suetin (1897-1954), a representative of Russian Suprematism - an art movement founded by Kazimir Malevich that stemmed from cubism and is a variant of geometric abstractionism. The assistant of the principal artist was Suetin's life-long partner, artist Anna Leporskaya (1900-1982), who mostly painted in the Post-Impressionist style. Together, they worked on earlier, smaller exhibitions devoted to the war, discussed in the second chapter, and many other wartime tasks in the besieged city. In this chapter, which continues the "bottom up" approach, I will follow the lives of Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya, survivors of the blockade, who, to a degree, successfully navigated Stalinism by adapting to it. Starting from their early years, through the blossoming of the Russian avant-garde and its subsequent marginalization, hunger, and war, I will show how the Soviet state suppressed art and innovation with the use of blunt and violent force, subjugating the surviving artists into conformity and approved forms of work and service.

For Suetin and Leporskaya, as subjects of history and its living witnesses, the political reasons behind the waves of terror were unknown and abstract, be it the internal struggle for power among the cliques or the efforts of Stalin to consolidate power or cleanse society of foreign elements. What mattered was the continuing struggle and extraordinary stress that accompanied

their creative work and everyday lives as Soviet artists. While they were never directly affected by the terror, they lived through the Great Purges and the terror of late Stalinism, and watched it swallow their friends and colleagues, including Lev Rakov, whose fate was discussed in the previous chapter. As a case study, their biographies provide an insight into the strategies of survival and adaptation of the creative intelligentsia during the Stalinist regime, in which the post-war purges of late Stalinism, including the Leningrad Affair, presented yet another attack on scholarship, culture, and art in the city that had already been devastated by the siege and resulted in the loss of a large cultural and intellectual legacy.[1]

The key for survival and adaptation to the ever-changing political circumstances for Suetin and Leporskaya was constant re-invention of themselves as professionals and finding new avenues of work. This ability stemmed from the teachings of Kazimir Malevich, who believed that the artist of the new era should know not only how to paint, but also be able to work in design, architecture, and applied arts. Before the war, Suetin achieved great professional acclaim as the artistic director of the Leningrad porcelain factory and the principal designer of the Soviet pavilions at the Paris and New York World's Fairs in 1937 and 1939, respectively. These successes helped him to survive during the first blockade winter, as he was able to receive additional provisions by writing to the party bosses about his important work for the Soviet state.

As Polina Barskova argued about the siege writers, "even in a situation of ultimate disaster, Leningrad created aesthetics of its own, a vast and complicated network of cultural representations of the Siege reality."[2] The writers, observed Barskova, used "aesthetics as a way to anesthetize the

[1] Blair A. Ruble argues that the Leningrad Affair significantly contributed to the provincialization of Leningrad, whose leadership, purged by Stalin, had big plans on its postwar revival as one of the world centers. "The Leningrad Affair and the Provincialization of Leningrad," *The Russian Review* 42, no. 3 (1983): 301-20.
[2] Barskova, *Besieged Leningrad*, 193.

experience."[3] From the perspective of the visual arts, however, the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad" was the epitome of the aesthetic response in the besieged city. The exhibition, created in the vast spaces of the Salt Town, concentrated the works of Leningrad's best artists, designers, and architects who lived through the siege and were tasked with shaping their experiences of life and death into the artistic form. Nikolai Suetin, as the head artist and designer of the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," applied all his diverse knowledge and skills to the project, as well as his own experiences of survival, creating a show that left an unforgettable impression on its visitors.

Despite the great success of the exhibition, Suetin's innovations and design methods were found wrong and harmful following the beginning of the Leningrad Affair. However, Suetin was not explicitly named as a target of attack, and survived the calamities once again, managing to preserve his high position as a creative director of the Leningrad Lomonosov Porcelain Factory until his death in 1954 from stress-induced heart disease. Anna Leporskaya, who was a gifted artist in her own right, played a largely auxiliary role in her public professional life, as at first she was Malevich's secretary, and then she assisted Suetin in his expo-design and porcelain projects. Her independent talent was fully recognized only after Suetin's death, when she became one of the leading artists at the porcelain factory until her passing in 1982.

***Suetin and Leporskaya in Malevich's Circle: Suppression of the Avant-Garde***

Nikolai Suetin was born into the family of a railway station master in the village of Myatlevo in the Kaluga oblast. He attended Cadet Corps in Saint-Petersburg, and after the beginning of the First World War was drafted to the army which eventually brought him to Vitebsk, Belarus. There, he attended People's Art School, founded in 1918 by Marc Chagall. In 1919, Chagall invited Malevich to teach at the Art School, where the former founded the short-

[3] Ibid., 8.

lived Unovis ("affirmers of new forms in art"), an avant-garde art group. Suetin quickly became one of Malevich's most devoted disciples, eventually mastering complex concepts of Suprematism.[4] In 1922, Malevich left Vitebsk for Petrograd, taking the main members of the Unovis group with him.[5] The following year, the artist became a director of the Museum of Artistic Culture which later was reorganized into the State Institute of Artistic Culture - Ginkhuk (*Gosudarstvenny Institut Khudozhestvennoi Kul'tury*). The institute was a research center and a professional school of modern art, where "art practitioners" and students studied contemporary art and its practical applications, including architecture, design, and exhibitions.[6] Suetin joined his teacher in Ginkhuk, which became perhaps the most important center of Russian avant-garde in Leningrad.[7] Among the artists who worked and created in the Institute were Ilya Chashnik, Lev Yudin, Vera Ermolaeva, Anna Leporskaya, Vladimir Sterligov, and others. One of the most important departments of Ginkhuk was the architectural lab, where Malevich, Suetin, and Chashnik worked on creating arkhitektons (also spelled "architectons") – volumetric compositions; a sculptural form of Suprematism.[8] Later, Suetin used arkhitektons in his porcelain and expo-design projects.

Anna Leporskaya was born in Ukrainian Chernihiv into the family of a Latin professor, but grew up in Pskov, where during the Civil War she briefly worked as a village teacher.[9] There,

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[4] On Malevich's theory of art see Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 15-32

[5] Evgueny Kovtun, *Russian Avant-Garde* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2007), 30-38.

[6] Among the heads of the departments were painter and architect - constructivist Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), one of the leaders of Russian futurism Mikhail Matyushin (1861-1934), and an art scholar Nikolai Punin (1888-1953), husband of Anna Akhmatova.

[7] About Suetin's work at the institute see V. Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin* (Moscow: RA, 1998), 75-78.

[8] Tatiana Goriacheva, *Nikolai Suetin* (Moscow, 2010), 113-121. My deepest gratitude to the author who provided me with the copy of her book.

[9] About Leporskaya see Marina A. Tikhomirova, *Anna Aleksandrovna Leporskaya* (Leningrad, 1979); "Anna Leporskaya," in *In Malevich's Circle: Confederates, Students, Followers in Russia 1920s - 1950s*, ed. by Yevgenia Petrova (The State Russian Museum, Palace Editions, 2000), 265-283; Yevgenia Petrova, *Anna Leporskaya. Zhivopis', grafika, farfor* (The State Russian Museum, Palace Editions, 2022).

she began to study art at the Pskov Art School. After its closure, the young artist came to Petrograd-Leningrad in 1922 to study in the Academy of Arts. After two years of study under artist Petrov-Vodkin she became disappointed in the Academy and its traditional, reactionary ways. Leporskaya, who met Malevich in 1923, was attracted by the artist's contemporary and radical ideas and officially joined Ginkhuk in the following year as an "art practitioner" and then a post-graduate student. She became Malevich's secretary and one of his closest disciples. In Ginkhuk, Leporskaya met her circle of life-long friends and both of her husbands. At first, Leporskaya married artist Konstantin Rozhdestvensky, but the union was short-lasting. Nikolai Suetin pursued her and was successful - Leporskaya left Rozhdestvensky and married Suetin in 1928.[10] "The divorce," wrote family friend, playwright Evgeny Schwartz, "was very hard for Anechka. It still seems to me that the decision to get a divorce was a force that pushes some women to where a pain awaits."[11]

The relationship of Suetin and Leporskaya was complex and unconventional, as Suetin had multiple other relationships throughout his life, including other marriages, but he always maintained some sort of a relationship with Leporskaya, to which she agreed, according to Schwartz, "out of her loyalty and inclination to the most difficult, the most painful situations."[12] Suetin's daughter Nina was born in 1939 from his marriage with Sara Kamenetskaya.

The end of Ginkhuk came in 1926 after an article in the June 10 issue of *Leningradskaya Pravda* blasted an exhibition of Ginkhuk's artists. The article "Monastery at the Expense of the State," was written by art critic G. Seryi (real name - Grigory Ginger (1897-1994)), who was an

[10] Petrova, *Anna Leporskaya*, 9-10. There is no documentary evidence of their marriage ever being official, but at different points at time they and their friends referred to them as spouses.
[11] Evgeny Schwartz, *Telefonnaya knizhka*, (Moscow, 1997), 269. Evgeny Schwartz (1896-1958) – was a Soviet writer and playwright.
[12] Ibid., 273.

ideologist of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) – an art group in the realist tradition, that rendered themselves as true proletarian artists and insistently fought against various organizations of leftist, avant-garde artists, albeit the latter did not hesitate to fight back.[13] AKhRR ideologists believed that the true proletarian art had to carry a literal Socialist meaning and be understood by "the masses," unlike the avant-garde art which could only be understood by the few.[14] G. Seryi accused the Ginkhuk's artists in counter-revolutionary actions:

> Under the guise of a state institution, there is a monastery with several holy fools (*yuródivyy*) who, perhaps unconsciously, are engaged in explicit counter-revolutionary preaching, fooling our Soviet scientific agencies. As for the artistic significance in the "work" of these monks, the creative impotence strikes the eye at first sight. […] Now, when the proletarian art faces gigantic tasks, when hundreds of truly gifted artists are starving, it is criminal to maintain a magnificent huge mansion so that three foolish monks can conduct unnecessary artistic masturbation or counter-revolutionary propaganda at the expense of the state.[15]

Malevich tried to defend his Institute with a letter to the Leningrad department of the Central Administration for Scientific, Scholarly-Artistic, and Museum Institutions (Glavnauka) that he satirically signed "Hieromonk of the monastery at the expense of the state: Iosaf. Secular name: Kazimir Malevich," but the wheel of punitive bureaucracy had already turned.[16] Following various administrative investigations and commissions, Ginkhuk was closed down in December

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[13] Evgeny Kovtun, *Avangard, ostanovlennyĭ na begu,* ed. by S.M. Turutina, et.al (Leningrad, 1989), 6-8. Boris Groys argues against supposed "innocence of avant-garde" and demonstrates how the left, avant-garde artists, poets, and writers, "merged aesthetic and political accusations, openly calling upon the state to repress their opponents." Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 23.

[14] The debates between the Communist theoreticians and Soviet cultural figures on what constitutes "proletarian" culture and art continued throughout the 1920s and resulted in the Cultural Revolution in 1928-1932. See John Biggart, "Bukharin and the Origins of the 'Proletarian Culture' Debate," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 2 (1987): 229–46; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "'Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1932," *Journal of Contemporary History* 9:1 (1974); Iva Glisic, "Chapter Four. The Soviet 1920s' Culture Wars," in *The Futurist Files: Avant-Garde, Politics, and Ideology in Russia, 1905–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 131-162; Angelina Lucento, "The Conflicted Origins of Soviet Visual Media," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 56/2-3 (2015): 401-428.

[15] G. Seryi, "Monastyr′ na gossnabzhenii," in *Leningradskaya Pravda*, 1926, No. 132, June 10th. Cited in *Experiment* 5 (1999), 166-167.

[16] Kovtun in *Avangard*, 10-11.

1926 and merged with the traditionalist State Institute of the History of the Art.[17] Being an avant-garde artist was becoming more and more dangerous; in 1930, Kazimir Malevich was arrested and imprisoned for a few months.[18]

Figure 5.1 Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya, 1928

In 1927, former members of Unovis and other avant-garde artists, including Leporskaya and Suetin, formed an unofficial group of "pictorial and plastic realism." Among the other members of this group were artists Vera Ermolaeva, Konstantin Rozhdestvensky, Vladimir Sterligov, Lev Yudin, and others.[19] Artists gathered in Ermolaeva's apartment every Wednesday to discuss art and organize small art exhibitions.[20] The group of pictorial and plastic realism was

[17] See documents in I.A. Vakar, T.N. Mikhienko, eds. *Malevich o sebe. Sovremenniki o Maleviche. Pisma. Dokumenty. Vospominaniya. Kritika* (Moscow: RA, 2004), 506-517.
[18] Ibid., 542-558.
[19] About the group's art see Evgueny Kovtun, *Russian Avant-Garde*, 82-83; Petrova, *Anna Leporskaya*, 8.
[20] About Ermolaeva see Antonina Zainchkovskai͡a, *Vera Ermolaeva, 1893-1937* (Moscow, 2009).

among the first targeted in one of the first waves of terror that started in Leningrad after the assassination of Kirov on December 1, 1934.[21] On December 25th and 27th, Ermolaeva, Lev Galperin, Vladimir Sterligov, Maria Kazanskaya, Nina Kogan, Pavel Basmanov, and several other artists were arrested.[22] A few others, including Konstantin Rozhdestvensky and Lev Yudin were brought in as witnesses.[23]

Suetin and Leporskaya were not among the persecuted artists and were able to survive this first wave of terror that affected a large group of their friends and associates. They did not taint their names with denunciations. However, with the consolidation of power by Stalin and the rise of totalitarian terror, the diversity in Soviet arts and culture became obsolete. In the conflict between the left, avant-garde artists and AKhRR, that dominated the 1920s art and culture scene, representatives from both sides often accused each other of counter-revolution.[24] The "AKhRR camp," however, eventually won, even though the group was disbanded along with all other artistic groups by the Central Committee decree of April 23, 1932. The resolution, which formally began the Stalinist phase in Soviet culture, dissolved all independent artistic and other creative societies and ordered the "creative workers" to organize in official unions based on profession.[25] The

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[21] Maria Silina argues that the terror against artists in the 1930s was unrelated to their art style as both avant-garde and AKhR members were affected, "The Struggle Against Naturalism: Soviet Art from the 1920s to the 1950s." *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 41, no. 2 (2016): 98-100.

[22] Antonina Nikolaevna Zainchkovskai͡a, "Tvorchestvo V.M. Ermolaevoĭ v kontekste russkogo iskusstva 1920-kh – 1930-kh godov," (Dissertation, Institute of Theory and History of Visual Arts of the Russian Academy of Arts, 2008), 290-292. Among the accusations against Ermolaeva were unpublished illustrations for Goethe's Reynard the Fox, that NKVD interpreted as anti-Soviet satire. Zainchkovskai͡a, ibid., 292-293.

[23] Lev Galperin's son openly accused Rozhdestvensky of incriminatory witness testimony against his father, Ermolaeva, and Sterligov. I͡uriĭ Krol′, "PriplI͡usovali meni͡a!," *Zvezda*, no. 11, 2011. Also see Semen Laskin, *Odinochestvo kontaktnogo cheloveka. Dnevniki 1953-1998 godov* (Moscow, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2019), E-book ed.,192-198.

[24] Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 23-30. In the most likely unsent letter that Ilya Chashnik wrote as a response to G. Seryi, a furious Chashnik wrote that the AKhRR campaign raised by Seryi "against everything yet alive and creative in Leningrad is not his initiative but the general politics of the counter-revolutionary force in the arts." I.G. Chashnik, "Monastyr′ na gossnabzhenii, stat′i͡a grazhd. Serogo ili seri͡a bezgramotnost′," *Experiment*, (1999 vol. 5): 168-171.

[25] Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 33.

crackdown on art and the free exchange of ideas culminated by the mid-1930s when state-sponsored socialist realism reigned ubiquitously as it was established as the country's official form of culture in 1934.[26] Social realism rejected abstraction in art and all other spheres of culture effectively prohibiting and even criminalizing formalism, i.e. valuing the form over content. Russian avant-garde had to cease to exist as an artistic force. In the words of art historian Evgeny Kovtun, "not only great names were voluntarily omitted from this 'reworked' picture [of Russian art], but also entire schools, organizations and movements. […] Art was stopped in its tracks while in fact still full of life."[27]

Despite the political circumstances, Suetin and Leporskaya remained loyal to Malevich until the death of their teacher and beyond. Malevich died in 1935 from cancer, unable to travel abroad to receive treatment despite multiple requests to the Soviet government. His last words to his disciples were: "Be Russian artists." Suetin and Leporskaya, together with his other former students, organized his funeral, and Suetin personally made the Suprematist coffin.[28] Art historians consider Malevich's funeral to be the last act of Suprematism. After Malevich's death, his name was effectively erased from Soviet official culture. His paintings were removed from the permanent exhibition of the Russian Museum and moved to the depositories. The first personal exhibition of Malevich in the Russian Museum took place only in 1988. Both Suetin and Leporskaya were loyal disciples and followers of Kazimir Malevich and had to resort to painting in the underground, without exhibiting their art. In order to survive, they turned to applied arts and

[26] About Socialist Realism see J. Guldberg, "Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice," in *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, ed. H. Gunther (London, 1990), 149-77; C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism. Origins and Theory* (New York, 1973); Susan E. Reid, "Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41," *The Russian Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 153–84.

[27] Kovtun, *Russian Avant-Garde*, 99. About the 1936-38 terror against the artists see Maria Silina, "The Struggle Against Naturalism, 91–104; S.M. Turutina, et.al *Avangard, ostanovlennyĭ na begu* (Leningrad, 1989).

[28] V. Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin* (Moscow, RA, 1998), 166. The location of Malevich's grave under his favorite oak near the village of Nemchinovka was lost during the Second World War.

expo-design. In these professional paths they managed to preserve the main principle of their teacher Kazimir Malevich – a commitment to the artistic form.

Figure 5.2 Malevich's disciples carrying out his coffin from the House of the Artists. Suetin and Rozhdestvensky are at the front. 1935.

### *Suetin in Applied Arts and Expo-design*

Despite ideological issues and the terror affecting his closest circle, Nikolai Suetin was able to establish himself in the world of applied arts. Suetin made a name for himself as a ceramic artist, working at the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory in Petrograd-Leningrad since late 1922, along with his fellow Ilya Chashnik and, at times, Malevich himself.[29] The artists applied Suprematist, abstract geometrical motifs to the white porcelain, creating unique products that materialized one of the goals of Suprematism – to bring it to the three-dimensional environment. One of the leaders of the Russian avant-garde, Mikhail Matiushin, wrote in 1923: "Malevich has had enormous

[29]About suprematism in ceramics and the role of Suetin see Paul Greenhalgh, *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 387-388; V. Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin*, 52-68; Elena Ivanova, "Nikolai Suetin's Porcelain," in *In Malevich's Circle: Confederates, Students, Followers in Russia 1920s - 1950s*, ed. by Yevgenia Petrova (The State Russian Museum, Palace Editions, 2000):142-145.

success; his student [Nikolai Suetin] has introduced the Suprematist form to tableware (porcelain fabrication). In Moscow, the sales are colossal. I rejoice hugely at this success. This saps the odious insinuations that art of the left would be incapable of integrating itself into life."[30]

Figure 5.3 Tea set painted with the Suprematist compositions by Nikola Suetin. 1923. Courtesy of the Russian Museum

Porcelain was a strategic industry, as Soviets sold it on the export market for the foreign currency that they desperately needed for rapid industrialization. Additionally, porcelain was used as a means of both domestic and international propaganda.[31] In 1932, Suetin was appointed artistic director of the Lomosonov Factory.[32] His colleague at the factory, Tamara Bezpalova-Mikhalyova, in her 1984 memoir, recalled that there were two candidates for the job of the artistic director, including Suetin, who then "recently had a surgery after an ear infection, was very pale and skinny,

[30] M. Matiushin, *Diary*, Book No. 2, Note of 14th April 1923. OR RNB, St Petersburg, f.656, translated and cited in Kovtun, *Russian Avant-Garde*, 96.

[31] See Nina Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Soviet Propaganda Porcelain," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 11 (1989): 126–41.

[32] In 1923-24 the position was held by Nikolai Punin, who hired many modernist artists, including Suetin and Chashnik. About Punin at the Porcelain factory see Natalia Murray, *The Unsung Hero of the Russian Avant-garde: The Life And Times of Nikolay Punin* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 159-164.

was walking around wrapped in a long scarf in red and white stripes - a gift from the wife of Malevich." Bezpalova-Mikhalyova, who found Suetin's Suprematist art "to be art for a limited circle of people, […] lacking both in color and, particularly, in the expression of an idea," wrote that Suetin's candidacy was supported by the other artists at the factory as they knew him as "an upright intellectual [*intelligent*] who loved the art of porcelain."[33]

Another creative outlet for Suetin was expo-design, although the prestigious work was associated with a high risk of prosecution and enormous mental pressure, beginning with the World's Fair in Paris and ending with Leningrad's Museum of the Defense. In 1936 Suetin, assisted by Konstantin Rozhdestvensky, won a competition to became the main interior designer of the Soviet pavilion at the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life held in Paris in 1937. Anna Leporskaya worked with her then-husband on the design of one of the pavilion's halls along with other artists from their Ginkhuk days - Boris and Maria Ender. The architect of the pavilion was Stalin's favorite Boris Iofan, and the main attraction of the pavilion was Vera Mukhina's monumental statue Worker and Kolkhoz Woman. Stalin and Molotov personally controlled the exhibition. Konstantin Rozhdestvensky described the atmosphere of fear during the preparation of the exhibition in a 1995 interview with art scholar Grigory Kozlov:

> Then [Stalin] visited when Mukhina's sculpture was almost ready. It was standing in the factory. Stalin arrived at night […]. The sculpture was standing tall – steel and huge. It impressed him. He favorably waved his hand: continue working. Then they reported [to him]: there is an overspending of the funds, 11 million rubles is already spent. He went silent and then said: "Fine, winners are not judged." But it was power! [We] trembled! Mystical force. Cruelty. Ruthlessness. Death. I still cannot help it when someone is knocking on the door at night – it is a reflex. Horrifying nights, horrifying days, horrifying weeks.[34]

[33] Tamara Bezpalova-Mikhalyova, "*Obo mne i o moikh tovarishchakh*," (Leningrad, 1984). Online publication, accessed May 15, 2022, http://bezpalova-mihaleva.narod.ru/vospom.html

[34] Grigory Kozlov, "Vragi naroda v Parizhe," *Artkhronika* (2007, no. 6): 105.

Figure 5.4 USSR pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris. Main staircase. 1937. Courtesy of BIE

The Soviet exhibition's design used monumental sculptures and many charts and schemes that demonstrated the successes of Soviet economics and society. Suetin incorporated avant-garde elements of design, including arkhitektons and the elements of montage and photo-montage – modernist methods often used in the Soviet avant-garde school.[35] Arkhitektons were especially prominent in the exhibition, as Suetin used them for pylons along the staircase, decoration of the openings, partitions, and stands (figure 5.4).[36] Avant-garde art, outlawed domestically, was still possible to be used abroad to demonstrate Soviet progressiveness. The Soviet pavilion was a

[35] Ilya Kukulin, *Mashiny zashumevshego vremeni: kak sovetskiĭ montazh stal metodom neofit͡sial'noĭ kul'tury* (Moscow: NLO, 2015), 175. Kukulin defines "montage" in broad terms as "a set of artistic techniques […]: a work or each image is divided into fragments that differ sharply in texture or scale of the image." Kukulin, 20-21.
[36] Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin*, 174-178. Dzhemma Manukian, "ĖKSPO 1937: vystavka trekh diktatur," *Artikul't* (2014, 14(2)): 25.

success in Paris – it shared the main award with the German one (designed by Albert Speer) and received many other prizes.[37]

Despite the triumph, the organizers of the Soviet pavilion, including Ivan Mezhlauk, the Commissar of the Soviet Section, were purged.[38] The artists, unlike the administrative management of the exhibition, were passed over by the purges and soon after their return from Paris were ordered to work internationally again – to prepare the Soviet pavilion at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair.[39] Ivan Mezhlauk, who was initially assigned as a head of the fair commission, was replaced by the head of Molotov's secretariat German Tikhomirnov. Rozhdestvensky recalled that when Suetin and him were ordered to Moscow from Leningrad to discuss the new exhibition they stayed on different floors of the hotel, so that if one of them gets arrested they would be able to notify the other by asking to pick up a forgotten coat at the other's room on a different floor. According to Rozhdestvensky, they tried to refuse to take a job at the World's Fair claiming they were artists, not designers, but Tikhomirnov's deputy Georgy Zarubin said: "You worked with the enemies of the people [in Paris]. And now you do not want to work with us?"[40] In another conversation with the artists Zarubin, according to Rozhdestvensky, told

[37] For the comparison of the Soviet, German, and Italian pavilions see Dzhemma Manukian, "ĖKSPO 1937: vystavka trekh diktatur," *Artikul't* (2014, 14(2)): 23-32; about the juxtaposition of the German and Soviet pavilions also see Danilo Udovički-Selb, "Facing Hitler's Pavilion: The Uses of Modernity in the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012): 13–47. In his detailed and insightful analysis on the two pavilions, Udovički-Selb mistakenly claims that Suetin's arkhitektons at the Paris Fair were unknown until his publication in 2014.

[38] Ivan Ivanovich Mezhlauk (1891-1938) - a Soviet government official. Was arrested in 1937 along with his brother Valery Mezhlauk, the head of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan), and Valery's first wife Sofia and third wife Charna. Ivan and Valery Mezhlauks were executed in 1938. Charna Mezhlauk was executed in 1941. Sofia Mezhlauk perished in exile.

[39] About Suetin's work at the world's fairs see Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin*, 172–184. About the Soviet pavilions in Paris and New York, see Mariia Maĭstrovskaia, M*uzeĭ kak ob"ekt kul'tury. XX vek. Iskusstvo ėkspozitsionnogo* ansambliа (Moscow, 2021), 190-215; about New York's pavilion see Anthony Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair, 1939," *The Russian Review* 57, no. 3 (1998): 364–79.

[40] Kozlov, "Vragi naroda v Parizhe," 109.

them: “In Paris there were just enemies of the people [working] with Mezhlauk. […] They were sabotaging, but you [artists] still made a good exhibition, that is why you were not arrested.”[41]

The artists began to work on the project of the Soviet pavilion in Moscow. Anna Leporskaya also participated in developing the interior design of one of the halls, though her position was ambiguous. In 1938 Suetin fell in love with a young English interpreter, Sara Kamenetskaya, who became his wife. At the same time, according to Evgeny Schwartz, Suetin convinced Leporskaya to keep some sort of a relationship with him. Additionally, Leporskaya’s wages were among the lowest since Suetin felt it was inappropriate to promote his ex-wife at work.[42] In 1939 Sara Kamenetskaya gave birth to a daughter, Nina Suetina.

The Soviet pavilion in New York was an even bigger success than in Paris, especially among the common visitors.[43] The Soviets did not grudge the money in order to demonstrate their socialist project at the World’s Fair that had the opening slogan “Dawn of a New Day” and the theme of the future. The pavilion represented the transition from old backward Russia into a modern industrial Soviet power.[44] Unlike the other pavilions at the fair, the structure built by Iofan was monumental, the walls were covered with marble and granite, and decorated with semi-precious stones. The pavilion featured a full-size replica of a section of Moscow’s Mayakovskaya metro station in Art Deco style, which was placed between two large mirrors that infinitely multiplied it. Another feature of the pavilion was the extensive use of mechanical models and electrified dioramas that created a theatrical effect. Suetin would later use these methods in

[41] Ibid., 108.
[42] Schwartz, *Telefonnaya knizhka*, 273.
[43] Some professional critics found it “vulgar” and “grotesque.” Anthony Swift, “The Soviet World of Tomorrow,” 375.
[44] Swift, ibid., 367. About the pavilion also see E.V. Konysheva, “Sovetskiĭ pavil′on na Vsemirnoĭ vystavke v N′i͡u-Ĭorke: poisk i voploshchenie arkhitekturnogo obraza,” *Noveĭshai͡a istorii͡a Rossii* v. 10, no. 3 (2020): 715:746.

designing “Heroic Defense of Leningrad,” which also employed multiple models and dioramas to represent the events of the war.

Suetin wrote an article about the art at the world fair in *Iskusstvo* - the official journal of the unions of the Soviet artists. In the article he praised the realism of the Soviet art exhibited at the fair: “Our paintings and sculptures are not only included in the exposition to contribute to the development of the main themes, but also to demonstrate the achievements of the Soviet art. Realism and sense of purpose sharply distinguish our art from the art of the capitalist countries. Our art is comprehensible by the masses.”[45]

Suetin’s criticism of the art of “the capitalist countries” as not realistic, not purposeful, and not understood by “the masses,” echoes the criticism that was directed at the Russian avant-garde artists, including Suetin, his comrades, and friends. It demonstrates the deep disconnect between the private life of an artist who could create in the way that he chose for himself only in secret and the public life of a Soviet citizen and official who had to proclaim loyalty to the artistic principles of social realism. Back in 1930, Suetin privately wrote about his feelings on this dissonance: “A reevaluation of people, things, concepts and images is currently taking place. New feelings and concepts are appearing. Religion and morals - a new vision of everything is being acquired. All artists have been thrown into confusion. Their art and their world do not bring forth values that satisfy them.”[46] On one hand, Suetin engaged in what Jochen Hellbeck described as Bolshevik “self-transformation” of a Soviet subject during a new historical epoch,[47] on the other, as an artist he resisted it, preferring privately to stay true to his personal convictions on what constitutes art which, he believed, transcends politics.

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[45] Nikolai Suetin, “Iskusstvo na vystavke,” *Iskusstvo*, no. 5 (1939), 105.
[46] Cited in Natalia Kozyreva, “Nikolai Mikhailovich Suetin,” in *In Malevich's Circle*, 140.
[47] Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 54-55.

The prestigious, but dangerous and extremely labor-intensive expo projects, as well as the high administrative position at the porcelain factory prevented Suetin from working on his own painting projects and caused him a lot of stress juggling the orders from above with the artistic aspects of his work. Tamara Bezpalova-Mikhalyova recalled that before the war, Suetin planned to paint a portrait of her husband and even made a frame for it – "a square with a round cutout for the image."[48] Suetin never completed the portrait. Bezpalova-Mikhalyova also described the influence of the factory's administrative work on Suetin, who had to face frequent "unpleasant explanations with the management" for various reasons: "Once, after another clash with the management, Nikolai Mikhailovich became very upset and dejected. More than once he repeated to me, to console both himself and me: 'Never-mind, Tamara Nikolaevna, the directors come and go, but the artists and their art remain.'"[49]

The transformation of Suetin - Suprematist, Malevich's Apostle, into an important expo-designer and a ceramic artist serving the Soviet state was deep. Evgeny Schwartz described changes in Suetin after the acclaimed Paris fair:

> With the death of Malevich - the head of the order, with success of the fair, he seemed to have allowed himself less sophisticated pleasures. His eyes looked wild. He drank half a liter of cognac with me, then wine, but nothing happened to him. Maestro[50] grew up, the door of the school with the death of the teacher flew open, and let him out into the crowd of adults and practical people. Intoxicated, he began not to preach, no, but to share practical experience. He explained how to deal with customers. How to behave - it's better not to recall. With truthfulness, characteristic to the people of his personality, he was not ashamed of himself in this new incarnation and believed that this was how it should be.[51]

Schwartz, who by then was an acclaimed author himself, using the word "practical" twice, seemingly criticized the conformism of the previously avant-garde artist. By 1939, however, many

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[48] Bezpalova-Mikhalyova, "*Obo mne i o moikh tovarishchakh*."About Suetin's frames see Oskana Lysenko, "Ot arkhitektonov K.Malevicha – k suprematicheskim ramam N.Suetina," *Panorama iskusstv*, no. 4, (2019): 262-283.
[49] Tamara Bezpalova-Mikhalyova, ibid.
[50] Suetin's nickname.
[51] Schwartz, *Telefonnaya knizhka*, 273.

artists from Suetin's avant-garde circle were either dead or jailed. A degree of conformism, compromises, and a skill described by Stephen Kotkin in *Magnetic Mountain* as "speaking Bolshevik," were needed for survival and, in Suetin's case, success. Perhaps Schwartz's disdain for Suetin's "practicality" was aggravated by the latter's infidelity to Anna Leporskaya and his alleged disregard for her material well-being.

In the 1939 article in *Iskusstvo,* Suetin noted that "the majority of [the American] designs with social themes are imbued with pessimism, fear of war and unemployment."[52] The American artists, however, were right to be pessimistic as the war, indeed, was getting closer. The success of the USSR at the world's fair was darkened by the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the invasion of Poland, and then was completely overshadowed by the beginning of the Soviet-Finnish war. Immediately after the signing of the pact on August 30, the cinema at the Soviet pavilion stopped screening one of the films - the anti-Nazi picture "Professor Mamlock," substituting it with "Lenin in 1917."[53] On September 2, *The New York Times* reported that the crowds of the visitors, shocked by the "bombs bursting in Poland yesterday," flocked to the international pavilions at the fair. The reporter described a scene at the Soviet pavilion, where an attendant "with the red ribbon bearing the crossed hammer and sickle pinned to his lapel" argued with two visitors about their disappointment in the Soviet pact with Nazi Germany (which did not participate in the 1939 fair):

[52] Nikolai Suetin, "Iskusstvo na vystavke," 107.

[53] Soviet Withdraws Anti-Nazi Movie, *The New York Times*, August 30, 1939, 12. The film, based on the play by German author Friedrich Wolf and directed by Herbert Rappaport and Adolf Minkin, was one of the first in the world that directly dealt with the state prosecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. It was banned in the Soviet Union overnight after signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. The screenings of the film resumed in the USSR after the beginning of the German invasion.

"Is it better," the Soviet attendant said heatedly, "that our country should have Germany, Italy, and Japan against it? Nobody will fight to help us if we are invaded. Who is going to help us - the Ambassadors? No, Russia must take care of itself. It is better this way."[54]

Less than two months later, at the end of November 1939, the USSR suddenly requested to withdraw from the World's Fair, which was supposed to reopen in May for the 1940 season, and did not give a reason. The Soviet army invaded Finland on November 30th. Despite the war, Finland stayed for the next season.[55] The Soviet pavilion was shipped back to Moscow with plans to rebuild it in Gorky Park though the plans did not materialize due to the war.[56]

In 1941, Suetin, assisted by Rozhdestvensky and Boris Ender, was designing the large exhibition devoted to the centennial of the death anniversary of Mikhail Lermontov, who was canonized in the 1930s along with Alexander Pushkin.[57] Emma Gershtein, a literary scholar and specialist in Lermontov, who participated in the organization of the exhibition, wrote in her memoir that the artists "penetrated into the inner image of Lermontov's works better than professional experts of literature." Instead of using design and décor that was stylized or imitated Lermontov's times, the artists used modern techniques, geometrical forms, and design methods that served as a canvas for historical art and other exhibits. The hall, decorated by Suetin himself, was devoted to the "official" topics of the role and influence of the author in the world and Soviet literature, but had the most distinctive structure. Suetin managed to create "an architecturally brilliant finale for the entire exhibition. It was a true apotheosis."[58] However, Lermontov's

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[54] Sidney M. Shalett, "Europe's Turmoil Reflected At Fair," *The New York Times*, September 2, 1939, 10.
[55] "Russia quits Fair; Finland to return; Reds to Raze $4,000,000 Pavilion," *The New York Times*, December 2, 1939, 2, 8.
[56] Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow," 379.
[57] See David Powelstock, "Fashioning "Our Lermontov": Canonization and Conflict in the Stalinist 1930s," in *Epic revisionism: Russian history and literature as Stalinist propaganda*, eds. Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison Wis: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 283-308.
[58] Emma Gershtein, *Memuary* (Saint-Petersburg, 1998), 291.

anniversaries were unlucky in the 20th century – the centennial of his birthday happened to be on October 15, 1914, right after the beginning of the First World War, and the 100th anniversary of his death on July 27, 1841, was completely overshadowed by the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Since the Germans began to bomb Moscow on July 23, the exhibition worked for one day, July 27, and then was closed down in order "to prepare for the evacuation of precious exhibits collected from all the museums of the Soviet Union. We did not even have time to photograph the exposition, a catalog was not prepared, there were no responses in the press. No one remembers this exhibition, as if it never happened. Meanwhile, it was kind of innovative in its structure, design, and in the scholarly method."[59]

***The War and its Aftermath. "Heroic Defense of Leningrad"***

Upon the closure of the Lermontov exhibition, Suetin returned to Leningrad. In August-September 1941 the Porcelain Factory and its employees were evacuated to Irbit, a town in Sverdlovsk Oblast, but Suetin and Leporskaya remained in the city.[60] Suetin's daughter Nina Suetina and her mother Sara Kamenetskaya were evacuated by the Union of the Artists to Bashkiria, along with other mothers and children affiliated with the Union. In 1943, Kamenetskaya tragically froze to death in a snow storm.[61] After the war, Nina Suetina was reunited with her father who brought her to Leningrad where she was raised by Anna Leporskaya, who became her "second mom."[62]

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[59] Ibid., 287.

[60] Another famous sculptor-ceramist working at the factory, Natalya Danko, also stayed in the city with her family. In the very end of the winter, Natalya Danko, her sister, artist and author Elena and their mother Olga attempted to evacuate to Irbit. Elena and Olga Danko died en route. Natalya Danko died shortly after reaching Irbit. Natalya Danko was one of the closest friends of Lubov Shaporina.

[61] Rakitin, *Nikolaĭ Mikhaĭlovich Suetin*, 75-78.

[62] Nina Suetina, "V N′i͡u-Ĭorke i͡a kak budto popala v mir Malevicha'," interview by Anna Matveeva, *Artgid*, January 14, 2016, accessed April 18, 2022, https://artguide.com/posts/952.

Just as people of all other professions, the artists of Leningrad participated in the war mobilization effort. The Leningrad Union of the Soviet Artists organized work for the artists, including tasks related to historical preservation, propaganda, manufacturing, trips to the front, and exhibitions. Membership in the Union, aside from professional recognition and future pension, provided artists with access to a canteen and to project work, although the value of money in besieged Leningrad was limited as food on the black market was typically bartered.[63] Nina Suetina credited Leporskaya with saving Suetin's life during the siege by being active in finding work for the both of them.[64] In a 1974 comment to newspaper *Sovetskaya kultura*, Leporskaya described Suetin's survival through work: "Starving, falling from fatigue, he still did not agree with that reality. Suetin acutely realized that immobility and inaction led to death. In these exact days an artist not accepting death arose in [him]."[65]

Anna Leporskaya's short siege diary notes were published in a 1969 collection of memoirs and diaries written by artists and about artists called *Podvig Veka* (*Feat of the Century*). The notes illustrate the diverse assignments that the artists worked on in the first months of the war:

> [I] had been packing furniture in the Hermitage for the evacuation. The echelons left. I was sent to [work at] the hospital […].
> Nikolai Mikhailovich [Suetin] is coming up with ideas on how to cover up the rolls of logs on the windows and covered up memorials. He makes sketches, mounts rolls with the battle posters and ROSTA window posters.[66]

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[63] Bidlack and Lomagin compared chances of survival for different professional categories and demonstrated that during the first siege winter "the chances of survival for registered artists were closer to the city's average rate: 83 of 225 (37 percent) perished." Richard Bidlack, Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 299.

[64] Suetina, interview.

[65] L. Zhadova, "Spustia͡ mnogie gody," *Sovetskaya kultura*, June 7, 1974, 8.

[66] ROSTA window posters were a type of Soviet satirical propaganda posters, developed during the Civil War for the Russian Telegraphic Agency (ROSTA). The posters were made by hand using a stencil. With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the posters, now called TASS (Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union) windows, were revived for the war mobilization purposes. See Jill Bugajski, "Artful Coercion: The Aesthetic Extremes of Stencil in Wartime," Art in Print 1, no. 4 (2011): 26–35; Mark Edele, "Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero According to Soviet Wartime Posters."

> I was assigned to manufacturing work. I am covering the inside of the bombs with polish in order for them to "work." It is minus 5 degrees in the workshop, the only source of heat is a small electrical stove that dries up the bombs. [67]

In the unpublished version of the notes, that are now kept in the Saint-Petersburg Union of the Artists, Leporskaya wrote that she worked in bomb manufacturing for two months, until she "got very ill with dystrophy and scurvy."[68] Artist Tatiana Glebova, who later married Leporskaya and Suetin's friend and another member of Malevich's circle, Vladimir Sterligov, also kept a siege diary.[69] Unlike Leporskaya's notes, her diary was published for the first time only in 1990. The astounding difference in the accounts demonstrates the high level of censorship in the siege publications until the years of Perestroika.[70] In the fragment below Glebova wrote about starving artists discussing their work in the evacuating Hermitage:

> December 1st
> Woke up in the morning and really would have liked to continue sleeping, but I needed to go to *gorkom* for the [ration] cards. […] In the *gorkom* I was standing in line to get the cards, as always in darkness and cold. But it was fun, because the artists surrounding me were chatting joyfully, recalling recent, yet happy days (until the present moment), when on compulsory labor [assignment] in the Hermitage they ate lentils without [ration] cards and pies with meat, and they were joking that the pies were stuffed with the pharaoh's mummy and a Scythian horse kept in the Hermitage. They were also recalling the times when they were capable of moving heavy vases and furniture. They were deciding if they could eat their own cat or dog and were sharing various impressions.[71]

Another woman, romantically connected with Sterligov before Glebova, was linguist Irina Potapova, who was a friend and neighbor of Leporskaya and Suetin. In her blockade diary

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[67] Anna Leporskaya, "Raboty nepochaty krai," in *Podvig veka*, 168.

[68] Quoted in Tikhomirova, *Anna Aleksandrovna Leporskaya*, (Leningrad, 1979), 8.

[69] Tatiana Glebova (1900-1985) – Russian artist, painter, illustrator, follower of avant-garde painter Pavel Filonov, and a member of his Masters of Analytical Art group from 1925-1932.

[70] In comparing the published writings and private diaries of notable Siege writers, Barskova observed that "in their diaries they wrote about the atrocities and abominations, about disappointments and fears; in their public works they wrote about heroism and courage." *Besieged Leningrad*, 194.

[71] Tatiana Glebova, "Dnevniki, vospominaniia," *Experiment*, (2010, Vol. 16, Issue 2): 374-375.

Potapova described the process of getting water from an open pipe located in a dug out pit near their house:

> The water was located pretty deep [in the pit], and buckets, kettles, or pots did not stay in weak hands and spilled some. As a result there was a large pile of ice surrounding the pit, and in order to get back your kettle or a bucket, you had to lay on the pile of ice and then lower the vessel. While the vessel was getting out, the water was spilling more and the ice area increased […] Then, one had to go up the staircase, covered with ice. […]
> I remember artist Nikolai Mikhailovich Suetin. Him and his wife lived on the fifth floor, and he, in a state of dystrophy, […], with swollen legs, lagged the water to the fifth floor and on the last step he slipped and fell. All the water spilled. He had no energy to go again, and tears rolled down his face.[72]

As the horrible winter of 1941-1942 continued, Suetin was close to death and, seemingly regretting his decision to stay in the city, appealed to his past service requesting help from the officials. On February 19, 1942 Suetin wrote a letter to Nikolai Solovyov, member of the Military Council, requesting assistance with sustenance and potential evacuation. Citing his bad health and "an artistic goal to reflect the heroics of Leningrad's defense and deployment of tasks facing the Soviet visual arts," Suetin requested to officially be sent to Kuybyshev (now Samara), or to another city with the opportunity to do artistic work. Suetin asked to "help him restore his health at home" and mentioned that his "family in Leningrad" included his wife (his official wife Sara Kamenetskaya was then still alive in the evacuation) and an aunt and requested to send them with him. Solovyov then ordered to give Suetin 1,000 grams of grains, 200 grams of butter, 1 bottle of wine, and 200 grams of cheese.[73] A month later Suetin wrote again, this time to Pyotr Popkov citing all his important state jobs, including the world's fairs and domestic exhibitions, as well as his current work of "decorating covered historical monuments as points of politically monumental propaganda, as well as painting work to reflect the heroic defense of the city and its people under

[72] Irina Potapova, "Fragmenty vospominanii," in *Belyi Grom Zimy*, ed. A.A. Shishkin (Moscow, 2017), 218.
[73] T͡sGAIPD SPb f.R-4000 op.2͡0 d.60, l. 75 cited in Nikita Lomagin, V tiskakh goloda: blokada Leningrada v dokumentakh germanskikh spet͡ssluzhb i NKVD (Saint-Petersburg, 2001), 433.

blockade." Suetin explained that he received a one-time assistance in February but was unable to evacuate due to severe malnutrition and lack of funds and pleaded to assist him with provisions by assigning him the so-called "academic rations" and giving him "some firewood" to help restore his health and support his "family of three people."[74] Popkov ordered to support Suetin's request and register him at a "special store" that was opened in January 1942 in order to provide additional nutrition to selected scientists, artists, and cultural figures. Persons registered at the "special store" could receive additional "academic rations" that included 2 kg of flour, 2 kg of grains, 2 kg of meat, 1 kg of sugar, and 0.5 kg of fats.[75] Such additional rations and the hierarchy of their distribution were not only a significance source of sustenance but also felt "like a promotion, or a medal, or a panegyric review in the newspaper."[76] In a sense, this blockade system of privileges was among the most extreme manifestations of the Soviet class structure, where the key to one's privilege was, as noted by Sheila Fitzpatrick, one's relationship to the state, "in particular, the state as an allocator of goods in an economy of chronic scarcity," since the status and privilege stemmed from the access to goods rather than ownership of the means of production.[77]

The inequality of rations, which defined one's chances to survive and was decided by the local party bosses essentially based on who was more useful or deserving to live, caused the creation of a new system of privileges leading to the resentment among the Leningraders.[78] Artist

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[74] T͡sGAIPD SPb f.R-4000 op.20 d.60, l. 115 cited in Nikita Lomagin, V tiskakh goloda: blokada Leningrada v dokumentakh germanskikh spet͡ssluzhb i NKVD (Saint-Petersburg, 2001), 453-454.

[75] Gennady Sobolev, *Leningrad v bor'be za vyzhivanie v blokade. Kniga tret'i͡a, i͡anvar' 1943 - i͡anvar' 1944* (Saint-Petersburg, 2017), 73-74.

[76] Lidiia Ginzburg, *Chelovek*, 529.

[77] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 12-13. In terms of Stephen Kotkin's theory of Soviet subjectivity, the siege hierarchy of privileges can be viewed in the context of the Soviet system of "intricate encounters, conflicts, and negotiations that took place in and around the strategy of state-centered social welfare in its extreme, or socialist, incarnation." *Magnetic Mountain*, 23.

[78] About the establishment of new privileges and hierarchy during the siege see Lidiia Ginzburg, "1943," in *Prokhodi͡ashchie kharaktery: proza voennykh let; Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel′stvo, 2011), 178-186.

Vera Miluitina, most famous for her sketches of the Hermitage during the siege,[79] recalled in her diary how this resentment potentially played a part in Suetin's vote on Miliutina's application to become a member of the Leningrad Union of Artists. When she came to the meeting of the Union's board in the summer of 1943, "hungry, barely managed to drag her folder with works," she was dismissively denied admittance as a member. Miliutina remembered the faces of those who were at the meeting, including Vladimir Serov, head of the Leningrad Union of the Artists, and "Suetin who cannot stand me; he could not forgive me an additional [ration] card, which was given to me for two weeks in 1942, and not to him; and I was given the card for the fact that I worked for 3 months on sketches of the Hermitage, hungry, and in incredible, hellish cold."[80]

As her health improved in the spring of 1942, Leporskaya began working again in addition to her compulsory labor in the MPVO. In her diary she wrote: "Today I am on duty on the roof. Damned moon! There will certainly be bombings. Every day we see fires from afar. Words like "bomb," "shell," "incendiary bomb" became regular, and they are followed by death."[81] Aside from her roof duties, Leporskaya spent 10-12 hours a day working at the Leningrad House of the Red Army and participated in the reopening of the exhibition "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the German-Fascist Invaders," briefly described in the second chapter of this dissertation. Leporskaya had been collecting materials in the Public Library looking for the historical analogies of the Leningrad siege: "found a XVII century print 'Sixteen months of siege of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius.' This [long siege] is impossible in our century."[82] Together with Suetin, they worked on creating a shorter, mobile version of the exhibition, that was then

[79] Barskova, *Besieged Leningrad*, 8-10.
[80] TsGALI SPb, f. 495, op. 1, d. 164, ll. 27ob.–28, cited in A. A. Shani͡avskai͡a,"K istorii sozdani͡a i bytovani͡a serii risunkov "Ėrmitazh v dni blokady" Very Vladimirovny Mili͡utinoĭ (1903–1987)," *Vestnik SPbGIK* No. 2 (43) (June 2020), 122.
[81] Leporskaya, "Raboty nepochaty krai," 168.
[82] Ibid.

mounted to the agitation cars and sent to the front. In May 1942 Vladimir Sterligov stayed at the artists' apartment when he was released from a hospital, where he was treated for a serious injury that he received at the Leningrad front. He was demobilized from the army and was permitted to evacuate from Leningrad. He was allowed to take one person with him and offered Leporskaya to join him; she decided to stay in Leningrad with Suetin.

Suetin and Leporskaya were involved in the popularization of the Russian pre-revolutionary military heroes, discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. In November 1942 they worked on decorating the graves of Alexander Suvorov and Alexander Nevsky:

> Upon the decision of the *gorkom* we are decorating the graves of the great Russian generals. Nikolai Mikhailovich is working on the grave of Suvorov.[…] I am decorating the grave of Alexander Nevsky. It seems that in this giant frozen Troitsky Cathedral with icy drafts is impossible to do anything, but it must be done. Fighters leaving to the front will be giving their oaths over these graves.[83]

At the same time, Leporskaya and Suetin attempted to leave the city again, probably worried about the prospect of another brutal winter in the besieged city. Around November of 1942, Leporskaya wrote to Nikolai Khardzhiev, writer and art collector, who was in evacuation in Alma-Ata, and asked him to arrange an official invitation for her and Suetin. Khardzhiev was unable to help and the artists stayed in Leningrad.[84]

In December 1942 Leporskaya began working in the partisan movement headquarters, where she was officially employed as an "artist-partisan."[85] She collected materials and, together with Suetin, designed the exhibition "Partisan Activities in the Leningrad Oblast," at The Lesgaft

[83] Ibid., 169.

[84] Letter from N.I. Khardzhiev to K.I. Rozhdestvensky, private archive. Cited in Tat′i͡ana Mikhienko, ed. *Konstantin Rozhdestvenskiĭ. K 100-letiiu so dni͡a rozhdeniia (*Moscow, 2006), 206.

[85] Tikhomirova, *Anna Aleksandrovna Leporskaya*, 14.

Institute of Physical Culture in spring 1943. For her work in the partisan headquarters Leporskaya was awarded a medal "To a Partisan of the Patriotic War."[86] Leporskaya recalled:

> [In 1942] Union of the Artists sent me to work for the partisan movement headquarters. I received small tasks. Turns out there is no end of work here, just as everywhere. Working on decorating the exhibitions, showing all sides of the partisan warfare together with Nikolai Mikhailovich.
> We are sending exhibitions in their reduced versions to the front. Agitation cars return back with "traumas," get repairs and then go back to the front.[87]

In December 1943, Nikolai Suetin and Anna Leporskaya, along with all remaining artists in the city, began working at the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad." The artifacts, Leporskaya wrote, were being delivered straight from the battlefields.[88] Suetin was appointed as a principal artist responsible for design and artistic concepts. Leporskaya, as always, became his assistant. Due to her experience working at the partisan headquarters, she focused on designing the partisan section of the exhibition, one of the largest and most diverse of exhibits. For Suetin, who, with the beginning of the war, finally began working on his own paintings, not burdened with the managerial job of the factory or the high pressure fairs of the 1930s, this appointment came as an unpleasant task that once again interrupted his personal creative plans.[89] Before his appointment, Suetin wrote two letters to a friend, Nikolai Khardzhiev, describing his plans. In a November 4th letter, Suetin told Khardzhiev about his new work, including six new drawings and frames for them that he planned to work on during the winter and finish for a potential exhibition in the spring. In a December 5th letter, Suetin complaining about "horrible everyday life (*byt*),"[90] shared with Khardzhiev that he has a lot of creative plans and thoughts about "what" and "how"

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[86] Petrova, *Anna Leporskaya*, 11.
[87] Leporskaya, "Raboty nepochaty krai," 169.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Goriacheva, *Nikolaĭ Suetin*, 175 - 179.
[90] About the battle of intelligentsia with the Soviet *byt*, see Svetlana Boym, *Common places: mythologies of everyday life in Russia*. (Harvard University Press, 1995), 29-40.

to create: “Kazimir said: “Be Russian artists.” Without it nothing can be. The question, of course, is “how”, i.e. forms, [is] the main thing ... Now I'm making large drawings. I ordered a frame. Working on frame profiles.”[91] Less than a month later, Suetin complained to his friend about a new task of creating the exhibition of defense, which he could not reject: “It is constant sheer nonsense. I was just about to crawl out into the sun like a lizard in the spring, and now all the cracks are filled up. Drawings, frames, forms – all are set aside, now I have to make an exhibition. You must be a janitor in order to be able to make art. [...] My friend, I am completely furious and completely powerless to turn this car, which drives like a tank on my head.”[92]

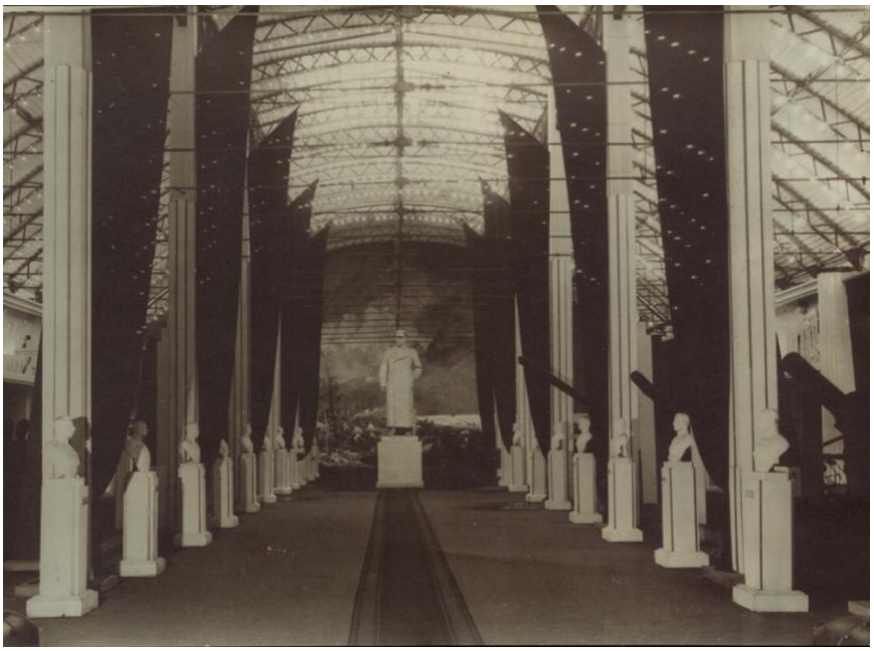

Figure 5.5 Victory Hall at the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. 1946 or after

The theme of a “double ring” around the besieged city, meaning the situation of both military blockade by the Nazis outside of the city and the policing inside of it is prominent in the writings of siege authors and memoirists. Dmitri Likhachev, who co-authored the book *Defense of*

[91] Cited in Lysenko, “Ot arkhitektonov K.Malevicha – k suprematicheskim ramam N.Suetina,” 280.
[92] Gori͡acheva, Ibid., 179.

*Old Russian Towns* (1942) during the siege, wrote, referring to his interrogations by police in the spring of 1942, that the readers of his book could not think about the "position of its author. And probably did not think about the differences in the positions of the besieged. We were besieged twice: with a double ring - outside and inside."[93] Lydia Ginzburg, on the other hand, wrote about the "strange reality" of the siege, that "in some way resembled that of 1937. Both the present and the past had its timetables. The present [German bombs] flew in at strictly fixed times; German precision became part of the psychological assault (we do what we want). The past [the NKVD in 1937] had been less meticulous, it was reckoned, however, that from around four in the morning until evening you could imagine yourself safe."[94] In Suetin's case, the state was policing over his creative freedom, suffocating him with orders that deprived him of the time and opportunity to create the art that he wanted.

Despite his despair at the lack of freedom, Suetin successfully worked at the new exhibition, which was aesthetically laconic and quite modernist, avoiding superfluous decorative details. Suetin used a lot of light effects, models, and dioramas, applying the methods that he used at the international fairs. He even included some elements of suprematism - in the Victory Hall Suetin used arkhitektons for the pylons and stands for the busts along the sides of the hall (figure 5.5). Another modernist technique on display at the exhibition was photomontage, which designers

[93] Dmitri Likhachev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2016), 214. Also see Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 338-340.
[94] Lydia Ginzburg, *Notes from the Blockade* (London: Vintage, 2016), 93-94; the original in Russian Lidiia Ginzburg, *Chelovek*, 590. Irina Sandomirskaia argues that Ginzburg "reveals a structural continuity between the siege and the experiences of living in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and 1930s; as well as between the siege and the postwar period up to the late 1980s." Irina Sandomirskaia, "A Politeia in Besiegement: Lidiia Ginzburg on the Siege of Leningrad as a Political Paradigm." *Slavic Review* 69, no. 2 (2010): 306-26. See also Van Buskirk E. *Lydia Ginzburg's Prose: Reality in Search of Literature*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016; and "Recovering the Past for the Future: Guilt, Memory, and Lidiia Ginzburg's Notes of a Blockade Person." *Slavic Review* 69, no. 2 (2010): 281–305. Another female scholar who documented the siege from a theoretical perspective – Olga Freidenberg, – blamed the "double barbarity of Hitler and Stalin" on the catastrophe of Leningrad. See Irina Paperno, "Osada cheloveka: blokadnye zapiski Ol'gi Freidenberg v antropologicheskoi perspektive," *Novoe literaturenoe obozrenie* no. 139, (2016): 184-204.

used to demonstrate the contrast between the production at the Leningrad factories before the war and after its beginning, e.g. train cars and light tanks, stocking machines and machine guns (figure 2.4). Lev Rakov described Suetin's style of work:

> He was a person of a rich artistic experience, […]. Having a sharp political flair and a strict taste, Suetin always sought the simple economical, most laconic and expressive solution. He did not tolerate anything superfluous, superficial, decorative. According to his idea, simple bright red shields stretched out along the walls of the main hall – Victory hall, as well as modest narrow bright red banners that decorated metal ceiling beams, turned a giant space (central hall of the former [agricultural] museum with the asphalt floor used for the demonstration of the agricultural machinery) into a truly triumphal hall. [95]

Figure 5.6 Staff of the Exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad." Ca. 1944. Lev Rakov, Nikolai Suetin, and Anna Leporskaya are in the second row to the left off center. Sergei Avvakumov is in the middle of the second row. TsGAKFFD SPb.

Another artist and architect, Vassily Petrov, who worked under Suetin on the exhibition's design, also highlighted Suetin's laconic and expressive methods in his recollection of the directions that the latter gave to the staff. Suetin showed them a small wooden plank, a piece of canvas, and two pieces of fabric: bright red and dark red, and called it a "palette of our work tools."[96] The carpenters then began making frames, stretch canvas or fabric on them and cover the

[95] Rakov, "Vystavka 'Oborona Leningrada'," in *Khudozhniki goroda-fronta* (Leningrad, 1973), 400.

[96] Audio recording at the State Memorial Museum of the Defense and Blockade of Leningrad, cited in A. L. Rakova, *Lev L'vovich Rakov*, 75-76.

beat up walls of the future exhibition, creating the base interiors for the exposition. The creative use of modest resources was a necessity in the absence of the most basic materials during the cold winter in the besieged city on the background of the continuing battles on the Leningrad front.

The conditions of work for the artists of the exhibition were extremely difficult, as they were lacking basic materials like paint, solvent, primer, canvas, stretcher, and brushes. Additionally, the exhibition was supposed to open on February 23, the Day of the Red Army, which left very little time for the workers of the exhibition. In the beginning of February, Vladimir Serov, head of the Leningrad Union of the Artists, wrote about the conflict with the administration of the exhibition to Boris Zagursky, head of the arts department at the Leningrad city committee. In the report Serov expressed his outrage at the administration of the exhibition in regards to its "horrible organization" and "unacceptable, outrageous attitude of the administration to the artists" and warned Zagursky that "if this situation continues for one more day, the work cannot be completed."[97] One of the biggest concerns of the artists was the 450 square meter mural that depicted the January 14, 1944 offensive battle at Pulkovo Heights that was meant to decorate a wall of the Victory Hall. Lev Rakov subtly hinted at these issues writing that "only the energy of artists V.A. Serov and A.A. Kazantsev ensured the timely completion of the grandiose mural. […] Captured trophies allowed to create a diorama in front of the mural, for which the enemy's pillboxes were delivered, the trenches were dug, the weapons were thrown, and the model figures of defeated fascist soldiers in authentic uniforms and equipment were made."[98]

[97] OR RNB, f. 1117 (B. I. Zagursky), no. 225.
[98] Rakov, *"Vystavka,"* 401.

Figure 5.7 Hall of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet

Using his experience at the New York fair, Suetin extensively employed dioramas and large murals, painted by the artists, to serve as "backdrops" for the authentic exhibits, e.g. real weapons used in the battles, creating a theatrical, yet realistic and immersive environment at the exhibition. For example, the Baltic Fleet hall had two real torpedo boats and a 130-mm B13 naval gun, which were used in actual warfare on the Leningrad front. In the background of the equipment was a large mural that depicted a naval attack (figure 5.6). The same theatrical set up that was created by the placement of the authentic weapons in the background of the murals or dioramas with the battle scenes was used in two other large halls of the exhibition: the Victory Hall and the Trophy Hall, that also featured a Soviet plane "flying" above the defeated enemy weapons (figure 2.20).

The designers achieved an immersive effect not only in the grand halls that displayed large equipment, but also in the intimate setting of the exhibition's sections that represented the tragedy

of the besieged city. In the display of the "Hungry Winter," a visitor looked through the frost-covered glass at a scale with the 125 gram piece of bread (figure 2.12). Through the use of understated imagery and small objects, the display symbolized hunger and the cold of the winter in the besieged city. The clicking of a metronome added to the powerful emotional effect of the display. The section of the exhibition devoted to partisan warfare, designed by Anna Leporskaya, combined both exhibition methods: large dioramas that showed partisan attacks neighbored with the displays with documents and photographs. The effect of the latter in one of the rooms of the partisan sections was amplified by a tree with bare branches, that stood near the exhibition displays symbolizing the severity of conditions in the underground resistance.[99]

Another artistic method that Suetin and his team used in the exhibition's design, especially when displaying the weapons, was creating the almost ornamental compositions that were made of multiple of the same item in order to strengthen both the aesthetic and symbolic effect of the displays.[100] The pyramid of the German soldiers' helmets (figure 2.19) was perhaps the most impressive of such displays, as the contemporaries recognized the artistic reference to Vasily Vereshchagin's gruesome "Apotheosis of War" (1871) that depicted a pile of skulls and was dedicated "to all great conquerors, past, present and to come." The author of the idea, artist and architect Vasily Petrov, had soldiers pick up the helmets on the battle sites, taking them from the killed invaders. Another example of such composition made from the trophies was the large arrangement of the German-made automatic firearms and ammunition (figure 5.7).

[99] I. V. Râzancev, *Iskusstvo sovetskogo vystavočnogo ansamblâ 1917-1970 raboty hudožnikov Moskvy i Leningrada* (Moscow, 1976), 127.
[100] Ibid., 129.

Figure 5.8 Stand of the trophy automatic weapons

After the exhibition was opened, Suetin and Leporskaya continued to participate in its updates and its subsequent transformation into a permanent museum. Evgeny Schwartz visited Leporskaya and Suetin in 1944, after the siege was lifted. Schwartz described another transformation in Suetin, as if the war and the tragic death of Sara Kamenetskaya made him return to his younger years of uncompromised art:

> Anechka, tall and cheerful, flew at me like a whirlwind. Maestro, smiling and looking [at us] a bit wildly, got up from the table, looking very similar to himself young, in his twenties. He has been painting the ruins of houses. And like a real student of Malevich, he explained his drawings, their theory. And yet [the paintings] were good. He kept painting a woman with a thin face, head tilted to one side, as in his previous paintings. And Anechka explained to me whispering that he wanted to find the feeling of a woman, dying in a storm in snowdrifts. Anya worked at the Defense Museum. She was [also] involved in the restoration of the hall of the Kirov Theatre. Life was in full swing.[101]

[101] Schwartz, *Telefonnaya knizhka*, 275.

Figure 5.9 Nikolai Suetin, Sketch for “The Victor.” 1942. Private collection

Meanwhile, Suetin returned to his job as the leading artist of the porcelain factory in 1943, personally searching for the surviving artists of the factory in order to restore the artistic lab, before the return of production from Irbit. Leporskaya, who worked at the porcelain factory since 1940 on a project basis, began working there as a full-time employee in 1948 and quickly became one of the leading sculptors, developing plastic forms of the ceramic products. Suetin was an increasingly important Soviet official who primarily managed the work of others as opposed to working on his own projects. In 1945-1946, the factory created a 2.5 meter tall vase “Victory” with Stalin’s portrait while, during the siege, Suetin made at least four sketches of a woman for a painting with the title “Victory” or “The Victor.” For Suetin, “a Russian artist,” disciple of Malevich, an unnamed woman in front of the city’s ruins was the victor; for Suetin, manager of the Soviet porcelain factory, it had to be Stalin. Suetin’s painting “Victory” depicting a portrait of a woman has since disappeared. According to a hypothesis of the art scholar Tatiana Goriacheva,

the painting was either lost during the destruction of the Museum of the Defense or was destroyed by Suetin himself out of fear of arrest and prosecution.[102] Either way, Stalin's terror continuously destroyed Suetin's projects, art, and way of life, in turn giving him the work of creating monstrous vases. As Barskova observed about the control of the Soviet ideologists over artistic representations, "the Nazi Siege caused pain, but the Soviet apparatus of power aggravated this pain by controlling and limiting possibilities of expression."[103]

Figure 5.10 Artists of the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory working on the vase "Victory." N. Suetin is standing on the left. 1946.

With the beginning of the Leningrad Affair in 1949, and especially following the arrest of Lev Rakov in the spring of 1950, Suetin anticipated his arrest too. The Soviet state not only

[102] Goriacheva, *Nikolai Suetin*, 182-184.
[103] Barskova, *Besieged Leningrad*, 194.

destroyed the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, as it destroyed Ginkhuk two decades prior, but it returned the fear, familiar to Suetin and Leporskaya following their experiences in 1934-1939. "That's why I'm a night-owl," said Nina Suetina recalling the Stalinist practice of arresting people at night, "because we lived our whole life at night, and not during the day; we were afraid that they would come at night, and [so we] did not sleep, fearing to be taken by surprise. Everyone lived at night."[104]

Suetin's concerns of prosecution were legitimate, since the museum's design and aesthetics were criticized along with its content during the height of the Leningrad Affair, which, among other victims, destroyed the museum. At the April 22, 1949 assembly of the museum's party organization devoted to the discussion of the district party organization's propagandist's lecture about the "rootless cosmopolitanism," the staff discussed the lecture and its application to the improvement of the museum's exposition. One of the senior staff members brought up the issue of formalism in many of the museum's halls: "[The museum's organizers] tried to achieve for each hall to have its own peculiarity, showiness. This showiness took over the content. Especially it feels in the halls "Battle on distant approaches," "Victory hall," "Hungry winter," "Artillery hall." The leading role of the party was not shown. We have to eliminate these distortions in the reconstructed exposition."[105] Another staff member criticized the elements of "formalism and estheticism," that stemmed from the [erroneous] goal to make the halls "exciting and unusual."[106] The resolution of the museum's party organization was to "direct all efforts of the Museum's staff

[104] Suetina, interview.
[105] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4440, op. 1, d. 220, l.13.
[106] Ibid., l. 14.

to the elimination of the shortcomings in its exposition, to the liquidation of the elements of formalism and of *pursuit of prettiness* in the Museum's design."[107]

The accusations of the exposition in "formalism and estheticism" were a product of Zhdanovschina's campaigns against everything that did not possess enough "Communist conscientiousness," defined by Dobrenko as a "peculiar sort of optics in the approach to reality, a strategy for selecting and evaluating realness, and a means of seeing the world in the Stalinist way."[108] Applied to the arts, formalism during late Stalinism was seen as the unconscientiousness of "pure art."[109] Accusations in formalism, inter alia, led to the third and last arrest of the art critic and scholar Nikolai Punin, who hired Suetin at the porcelain factory back in 1923; artist Vladimir Serov, Suetin's colleague at the "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," testified against Punin.[110] Of course, Suetin, who was not only majorly responsible for the aesthetics of the museum, but also had a background in Suprematism, the very name of which referred to supremacy of "pure artistic feeling," was a potential aim of these accusations, albeit he was not personally named in the discussions, unlike Lev Rakov.

Even more dangerously for Suetin, the design of the museum, its methods, effects, and "carelessness," were condemned at the meeting of the *gorkom*'s propaganda and agitation department in September 1949, after the museum was already closed for public in order to rebuild the exposition and rid of its ideologically incorrect components. Moscow-appointed director Leonid Dubinin was especially critical of the design methods and "effects," joined by the others who disparaged the "depressing feeling" of the museum and the "heavy impressions" left by the

[107] Ibid., l. 15. Emphasis mine.
[108] Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, 180.
[109] Ibid., 180.
[110] Murray, *The Unsung Hero*, 272, 274.

"effects."[111] The secretary of the museum's party organization Valentina Andrianova, who was present at the meeting, specifically noted the "absolutely invalid arguments" of "some other comrades" working in the museum, who argued that the museum "is of a special kind," that "[we] need to preserve the spirit of the era, to save a [model] of a destroyed apartment, plywood, covered up windows, etc."[112] According to Andrianova, however, all of these effects needed to be destroyed and removed in order to build a museum which "would not look like a museum that we had before."[113] The very unique nature of the museum and the innovative design methods that made it "exciting and unusual" were under attack by the unleashed ideologists.

For unknown reasons, perhaps due to his high position at the porcelain factory and Stalin's vases, Suetin survived the terror once again. Suetin fully possessed the skill of adaptation, was fluent in "speaking Bolshevik," and proficient in the art methods of social realism and the style that Dobrenko described as "varnishing art."[114] In 1949, Suetin led a group of artists on a project of the 3.4 meter tall vase "Soviet People – to Stalin" for the generalissimo's 70th birthday. Leporskaya was one of the authors of the project.

When Joseph Stalin died on March 5, 1953, the Lomonosov Factory received an order for the funeral wreath made out of porcelain roses. Suetin personally went to deliver it to Moscow. The next day he had a massive heart attack. After a long time spent in the hospitals in Moscow and Leningrad, Suetin died on January 22, 1954.

Leporskaya continued working at the porcelain factory until the end of her life in 1982. She became one of the leading Leningrad sculptors of porcelain, developing laconic and elegant

[111] TsGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 28, d. 352, ll. 1-2.
[112] Ibid., l. 6.
[113] Ibid., l. 8.
[114] Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, 130.

tea and coffee sets and vases (figure 5.10). Since the 1960s, she also began creating her own porcelain painting designs. She continued to be a faithful disciple of Malevich, zealously protecting his heritage and keeping an archive of his documents and drawings. One of her tea set paintings, "The Sheafs," created in 1974 (figure 5.9), subtly references her teacher's Peasant cycle. In the spirit of Korney Chukovsky's saying "You have to live in Russia for a long time, then something will work out," in 1977 Leporskaya finally saw her first personal exhibition that included her porcelain and some of her paintings.

Nina Suetina married the son of another of Malevich's disciples, Ilya Chashnik (1902-1929), also named Ilya. After the death of Nina Suetina in 2016, her will executor gifted Leporskaya's archive, containing drawings and documents pertaining to Kazimir Malevich, Nikolai Suetin, Ilya Chashnik, and Leporskaya herself to the Russian Museum.[115]

Figure 5.11 Tea and dessert set "The Sheafs." Porcelain painting by Anna Leporskaya, 1975. Courtesy of the Russian Museum

[115] About the works of Malevich in Anna Leporskaya's archive, see Troels Andersen, *K.S. Malevich: The Leporskaya Archive* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011).

Figure 5.12 Coffee and dessert set "Leningrad." Designed by Anna Leporskaya, 1961. Courtesy of the Russian Museum

Describing the funeral of Suetin, Evgeny Shwarz noted the destitute appearance of the attending "left" artists: "Except for Kostya Rozhdestvensky and two or three others, the rest looked like a crowd of beggars by the church. Tattered, shabby, some with a bandaged cheek, some in a cotton-padded jacket (*vatnik*), some with a bandaged eye, some lame. There were survivors from the fun and roaring time of the twenties, left artists - miraculously survived, beaten up [by life]. Now, they ate and drank from time to time."[116] Being an embodiment of the archetype of the "starving artist" was not a choice for the majority of these people, who went through the literal destruction of all possible institutions and spaces of creativity, and had little opportunity to fit in to the official culture of the Stalinist state. The Soviet government, that promised freedom of expression to its citizens at the dawn of its existence, destroyed it continuously and with relentless power. While Suetin and Leporskaya were among the luckiest artists of their circle, they were restricted from making the art that they truly loved. The lives of Suetin and Leporskaya reflect the

[116] Schwartz, *Telefonnaya knizhka*, 279.

Soviet politics of the constant assault and destruction of art, cultural institutions, and individual artists who were unorthodox, or perceived as such. Artists who survived the repressions had to conform to the strict ideological guidelines imposed on all spheres of art and culture, albeit the arbitrary purges of the Stalinist era oftentimes affected even the most orthodox people and true believers. In the words of Rozhdestvensky, "How unlucky we were to be born, live and work in such a deadly time for art."[117]

For the history of the blockade and its memory, the destruction of the Museum of the Defense meant the interruption of scholarship, the physical loss of a significant mass of documentary and artistic materials and other artifacts, and the formation of the narrative of Leningrad's victimhood and its special identity. In the context of political history, the end of the Museum of the Defense, which was destroyed by the same force that annihilated the leadership of Leningrad, signified an attack on the city itself and its localized narrative of the war. For the creators of the museum, the destruction of the Museum of the Defense was yet another wave of Soviet terror that annihilated their work and threatened their lives after they survived the worst siege in history. For Soviet and Russian culture and art, each individual tragedy resulted in the loss of heritage and the disruption of development.

**Conclusion**

In 1943, the Hermitage Museum, whose most valuable collections were evacuated to Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) from Leningrad in the first weeks of the German-Soviet war, organized an exhibition "Heroic past of the Russian people." The plan of the Sverdlovsk exhibition was based on the pre-war exhibition "Military past of the Russian people," spearheaded by Lev

[117] Letter from K.I. Rozhdestvensky to N.I. Kostrov, 11 September, 1993, private archive. Cited in Mikhienko, *Konstantin Rozhdestvenskiĭ*, 234-235.

Rakov in 1938. The difference between them was the addition of contemporary content related to the war being waged on Soviet soil. Among the topics were "Heroic fight of the Red Army with the German invaders," "Fascism - enemy of the culture," "Military alliance of the USSR, England, and USA against Germany and its European allies," and "the Soviet rear."[1] The exhibition, organized in Sverdlovsk by the evacuated staff of the Hermitage, was one of the instances of the Soviet museum workers joining the efforts of the state propaganda machine to mobilize the population for the country's defense from the first days of the German invasion.

Eventually, the efforts of the museums workers, propaganda officials, local party bosses, and historians, who collected war-related materials across the Union, led to the creation of a number of specialized war-themed exhibitions and museums, including the exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," opened in April, 1944; State Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Minsk, opened in October, 1944; and "Partisans of Ukraine," opened in 1946. The goal of these institutions was to present the narratives of the war for the ideological mobilization of the population as well as historical preservation for posterity. While the museums generally followed the framework developed by the central state ideologists, my dissertation demonstrates that the narrative at each exposition had significant differences based on regional and local political factors, including personal interests of the local party bosses. Additionally, I argue for the expanded understanding of personal agency and initiative of the museums' organizers and workers responsible for the creation of each exposition.

The exhibitions of trophy weapons became another dominant type of ideological display as the Soviets came into possession of an array of German weaponry after the start of the Red Army's strategic counter-offensive after the Battle of Moscow and the failure of Operation

[1] "Plan peredvizhnoĭ vystavki "Geroicheskoe voennoe proshloe russkogo naroda," razrabotannyĭ filialom Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitazha v g. Sverdlovske. 1943 g," *Istoricheskiĭ arkhiv*, no. 4 (2005): 53 - 64.

Barbarossa. Moscow, in particular, hosted a grandiose trophy exhibition at Gorky Park from June 22, 1943. The analysis of the exhibition's plan, personally reviewed and edited by Stalin, and of the show's press reviews, demonstrates that the display of the defeated weapons at the park had two ideological functions. First, the enemy's powerful weapons were meant to show the need for the continuous mobilization of the Soviet people in an era of total war, as reflected in perhaps the most definitive propaganda slogan "All for the Front, All for Victory!" Second, the emphasis of their humiliating defeat was used to testify to the strength of the Red Army, boosting the morale of the attendees. Similar outdoor displays of trophy weapons were organized in many other Soviet cities, including Leningrad, Minsk, and Kyiv.

In this dissertation, I have examined how war museum culture in the Soviet Union rose to prominence during the Second World War, and discussed its decline in the post-war years. The museums and exhibitions, devoted to the then-current events of the struggle against the German invaders, constituted an important part of the war propaganda machine in 1941-1945 and should be analyzed in its context. An historical analysis of their content and presented narratives provides insights not only into Soviet propaganda methods and ideological discourse, but also about regional diversity and the variety of ways in which the Soviet people remembered, memorialized, and commemorated their war experiences. In order to examine and compare these differences, I explored the case studies of the war exhibitions and museums in four Soviet cities: Kyiv, Minsk, Moscow, and Leningrad, with a special focus on the latter. These cases teach us about the representation of the war, its memorialization and narration in the Soviet Union, regional socio-political factors, and post-war Stalinism in general.

The war museums and exhibitions played an important role in the Soviet wartime propaganda machine and continued to be employed as crucial ideological institutions in the first

post-war years. However, with the beginning of the Cold War and adjusting of the country's mobilization goals from the front to rebuilding, Stalin lost interest in active war commemoration and related expensive memorialization projects. Additionally, Stalin's nation-building goal to create a union-wide central narrative of the war went against the local initiatives of war commemoration. In the last years of his rule, the trophy displays were dismantled throughout the Union, and the weapons recycled as scrap metal. War-themed historical museums/exhibitions were closed in the vast majority of Soviet cities, with the notable exceptions of Minsk and Stalingrad. The fate of each particular institution, however, depended on a variety of political and local factors. In particular, I employ the analytical framework of client-patron networks in Soviet politics, while discussing the factors that led to the fates of the war museums: the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad belonged to the patronage network of the local party leaders who were purged during the Leningrad Affair. The purge, which sought to repress Leningrad's particularism and local patriotism, led to the further centralization of power in the USSR, both politically and ideologically.

The exhibition "Heroic Defense of Leningrad," which later became the Museum of the Defense, was a pioneering institution among the war museums and is the main "character" of this dissertation. Largely due to its isolation from the "mainland" during the siege, as well as because the narrative of the war was still forming on the central level, Leningrad's professional ideologists and public intellectuals created a distinctly local narrative, or "myth" of the siege, which focused on local patriotism, the leading role of the local party organization, and heroism of the city's defenders, including all civilians. Although Stalin's figure was omnipresent in the exposition that used many of the "great leader's" portraits, statues, and quotes, the exhibition/museum also focused on the achievements of the local party leaders, which was not a common feature of public

displays at the time. Despite the ideological pervasiveness, I argue that the organizers of the museum managed to create a unique space that memorialized human experiences and suffering; its focus on the heroics, on the other hand, served a therapeutical function for the survivors of the Siege assisting them to process the horrors of their experiences. The museum was a true lieu de mémoire, a site of memory, using Pierre Nora's concept. However, the museum was also a designated research center that collected materials on the siege and the city's defense, performing an archival function. Thus, when the museum fell victim to the Leningrad Affair, its destruction disrupted and altered both Memory of the siege and its History, as it led to the interruption of scholarship and the loss of a great mass of the siege-related materials, documents, and artifacts.

As much as this dissertation is a history of the museums, it is also a history of the people who created them, visited them, and lived through the discussed events. In particular, the last two chapters of the dissertation are devoted to the examination of the biographical case studies of a few remarkable individuals who contributed to the creation of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, namely its first director Lev Rakov, principal artist Nikolai Suetin and his assistant and designer of the Partisan section, Anna Leporskaya. By studying their personal and professional backgrounds, I investigate their individual input, initiative, and talents which they employed to create the museum and the process of negotiation and mutual exchange of discourse that went between the ideological function of various state actors and the sincere desire on behalf of the museum's organizers to create a lieu de mémoire that memorialized their wartime experiences. The museum's organizers, however, inevitably had to assume the ideological function too, stemming from their roles as members of the Soviet intellectual and artistic elite. Employing ego-documents (diaries, memoirs, letters, and other personal writings) as my primary sources, I examine how these people self-fashioned themselves as Soviet intelligentsia, rising to professional

acclaim. However, the "self-fashioning as a Soviet citizen," observed Fitzpatrick, "implies that there is a non- or anti-Soviet self that is being denied."[2] Throughout their lives my characters engaged in the private preservation of their "anti-Soviet selves," which was not fruitless for world culture; Anna Leporskaya preserved the works of Malevich and other avant-garde artists through the war, siege, and waves of terror. Lev Rakov, a member of the Communist Party, saved literary autographs of Mikhail Kuzmin; some were eventually published for the first time after Rakov's death and enriched the legacy of the poet, forgotten by Soviet culture for decades.

The story of my characters is a story of the great tragedy of the Soviet intelligentsia during late Stalinism, who not only lived through one the greatest humanitarian catastrophes, which was the Leningrad's blockade, but had to face the political terror after it ended. Despite his professional success and efforts to adapt and survive to the ever-changing Stalinist political and cultural climate, Lev Rakov was imprisoned and saw his greatest project, the Museum of the Defense, being destroyed. Malevich's disciple Nikolai Suetin had to resort to create monstrous vases for Joseph Stalin in the final years of his life and lived in fear of political prosecution. The dissertation demonstrates the variety of different outcomes experienced by the people involved with the Museum of the Defense. Some, like Rakov, were imprisoned; others, like Rakov's successor Vassily Kovalev, lost their jobs. Suetin was able to keep his high position at the Porcelain factory and was not prosecuted. These outcomes depended on a variety of often arbitrary and illogical factors as much as on a person's own strategies of survival. Some people, like deputy director Grigory Mishkevich, were targeted due to their Jewish origins. Insights from the case studies discussed in two last chapters can be extrapolated on the broader discussions of terror against Leningrad's intelligentsia during the last years of Stalin's rule. In relation to the city and its

[2] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the masks!*, 152.

community, the Leningrad Affair was a culmination of the ideological and political campaigns unleashed by Stalin and Zhdanov beginning in 1946, and should be viewed in the larger context of late Stalinist terror. The repressions against the city's leaders and intelligentsia cemented the discourse of Leningrad's victimhood, leading to the formation of a separate identity for the Leningrader that particularly blossomed during the years of Perestroika.

During Perestroika, the Museum of the Defense in this context became a symbol of Leningrad's victimization by Stalinist terror. A large grassroots campaign prompted its reopening as the State Memorial Museum of the Defense and Blockade of Leningrad in 1989.[3] The new museum, however, is incomparable in size and overall effect to the original museum; the current exposition only occupies approximately 600 square meters. Between 2014-19 a long societal discussion regarding the necessity of building a new, expansive museum that would move from mythologization of the siege and become a large center for scholarship and education accompanied an architectural competition that resulted in approved construction plans for the new museum. The plans, however, were frozen and then abandoned by the new governor of Saint-Petersburg, Alexander Beglov, in 2019. As occurred many decades ago, the construction of the new museum-memorial was deemed politically inconvenient, inexpedient, and expensive. The city's government has decided to invest in the existing museum instead. However, one of the most prominent scholars of the siege, Nikolai Lomagin, pledged to find private funding for a non-governmental research center of the blockade, akin to Israel's Yad Vashem devoted to the remembrance and study of the Holocaust.[4] The new political, economic, and moral crisis in Russia

[3] Buianova, *Muzeĭ Leningradskoĭ Pobedy*, 120-144.

[4] Sergeĭ Satanovskiĭ, "S muzeem vyplesnuli rebenka," Novaya Gazeta, accessed July 26, 2022, https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/03/04/79766-s-muzeem-vyplesnuli-rebenka

stemming from its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 will likely put the question of the new blockade research center to rest.

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GARF — The State Archive of the Russian Federation

OR RNB — The Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia

RGALI — Russian State Archive of Literature and Art

RGASPI—Russian State Archive of Social and Political History

TsGA SPb — Central State Archive, St. Petersburg

TsGAIPD SPb — Central State Archive of Historical-Political Records, St. Petersburg

TsGAKFFD SPb — Central State Archive of Documentary Films, Photographs, and Sound Recordings, St. Petersburg

TsGALI SPb — Central State Archive of Literature and Art, St. Petersburg

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