



Leningrad: State of Siege

By Michael Jones

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“All offers of surrender from Leningrad must be rejected,” wrote Adolph Hitler on September 29, 1941, at the outset of Operation Barbarossa. “In this struggle for survival, we have no interest in keeping even a proportion of the city's population alive.”

During the famed 900-day siege of Leningrad, the German High Command deliberately planned to eradicate the city's population through starvation. Viewing the Slavs as sub-human, Hitler embarked on a vicious program of ethnic cleansing. By the time the siege ended in January 1944, almost a million people had died. Those who survived would be marked permanently by what they endured as the city descended into chaos.

In *Leningrad*, military historian Michael Jones chronicles the human story of this epic siege. Drawing on newly available eyewitness accounts and diaries, he reveals the true horrors of the ordeal—including stories long-suppressed by the Soviets of looting, criminal gangs, and cannibalism. But he also shows the immense psychological resources on which the citizens of Leningrad drew to survive against desperate odds. At the height of the siege, for instance, an extraordinary live performance of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony profoundly strengthened the city's will to resist.

A riveting account of one of the most harrowing sieges of world history, *Leningrad* also portrays the astonishing power of the human will in the face of even the direst catastrophe.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Herald (Glasgow), May 17, 2007

“Jones charts the journey through moral and physical nightmare via the recollections of some who clung doggedly to life and from the diaries of many who did not see the end of the torment. It is a powerful narrative, evoking images of a descent into chaos few who had not experienced it could possibly imagine....Jones's gripping account is a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit in circumstances where it might easily have been overwhelmed, not by German firepower, but by sheer horror.”

The Historian

“*Leningrad: State of Siege* makes for compelling reading, and it is recommended to anyone who wants a better understanding of the human, and all too often tragic, dimension of the experience of ordinary people who lived in Leningrad and indeed much of Europe during the Second World War.”

About the Author

Michael Jones has a Ph.D. in history from Bristol University and has taught at Glasgow University and Winchester College. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he has previously written books on Agincourt and Stalingrad. He lives in Croydon, England.

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