The nine hundred days of Leningrad: war and life.

Executive summary

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# Introduction Some words about Leningrad`s history.

The city of Leningrad was named after the great leader - Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The city faced and survived “the Great October Socialist Revolution”. It was the cradle of “The great October Revolution”. Leningrad is one of the largest political, economic, scientific and cultural centers of the country. It is one of the most beautiful cities of the world. For revolutionary achievements, fighting and labor merits the city of Leningrad was awarded by two awards named after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, they are: "The Order of the October Revolution" and "The Order of the Red Banner ". People of Leningrad showed unparalleled feat during The Great Patriotic War to gain the honorary title "Hero town" to the city. Leningrad also was awarded with the «Gold Star» medal. Yet, this greatness had cost too much for the citizens.

The hardest times were when the “siege of Leningrad”, also known as the “Leningrad Blockade”[[1]](#footnote-1), nowadays the city is recognized by the name St. Petersburg, broke forth. The siege lasted more than nine hundred days, somewhat near two and one-half years. According to article named “The Siege of Leningrad”, the nightmare began “on September 8, 1941 when German troops finished the city`s encirclement. The major plan was tactically moving towards Moscow. Hitler made a strategic option to fight the Leningrad`s problem to beggar the city into submission rather than to commit to action such valuable resources by performing a direct attack[[2]](#footnote-2)”. Hitler's deepest desire was to level Leningrad to the ground and present the Finns with the north areas of the Neva River. German “Operation Barbarossa” and the “Army Group North” had three strategic goals – capturing the city of Leningrad was one in then, not the first yet not the least. There were several strategic importance issues that forced Leningrad`s siege, as in:

* Being political status as the former capital of Russia;
* Being the token capital of the Russian Revolution;
* Being Soviet Baltic Fleet military main base;
* Representing the industrial strength of Russia;
* Housing great number of small and military factories.

By 1939 Leningrad was responsible for eleven present of all Soviet industrial outputs[[3]](#footnote-3).

Adolf Hitler hated the city of Leningrad; he hated peoples` spirit and their will to defend their mother land. Hitler was so vicious and confident about his victorious capturing plan. He had planned the August 9, 1942 to be the date of Leningrad fall. Hitler had printed invitations to the victory celebration party to be held in the heart of Leningrad's imperial center the “Hotel Astoria” which was opposite St Isaac's Basilica.[[4]](#footnote-4) According to a directive sent to Army Group North on September 29, "After the defeat of Soviet Russia there can be no interest in the continued existence of this large urban center. [...] Following the city's encirclement, requests for surrender negotiations shall be denied, since the problem of relocating and feeding the population cannot and should not be solved by us. In this war for our very existence, we can have no interest in maintaining even a part of this very large urban population."[[5]](#footnote-5)

The German army was not alone when taking Leningrad into siege, there also were:

* The Whites (Finland)
* «The Blue division» from Hitlerite Spain,
* legionaries of the Netherlands,
* Holland,
* Belgium,
* Norway typed from fascist henchmen.

The enemy’s` armies substantially outweighed ours. People of Leningrad created “People's volunteer corps” to help and assist the Soviet army. “The Corps” consisted of workers, white collar workers and students. Clandestine forces and guerrilla groups were brought into being in the occupied areas of Leningrad neighborhood by brave people who were ready to die and protect their homeland.

In July 1941 the enemy was slowed down during a bloody massacre. The Northwest and Northern establishment along with the Baltic front seamen managed to detain the enemy on the distant approaches to the city of Leningrad. Hitler managed to come closer to Leningrad in the beginning of September. His army could not seize the city and level it to the dirt right away that is why it was decided to perform a long siege. The Soviet brave and self-denying soldiers were fighting back till the last drop to receive the blow and go through fire and ice.

The enemy could not overcome resistance of brave defenders of the city of Leningrad that is why they went on a try to strangle the city with a blockade, to destroy it by devastating air attacks and artillery bombardment.

Courage and never-say-die attitude of the Soviet soldiers created a force so powerful that it helped to defend their native city. The spirit to win unity was the secret weapon of Leningrad`s invincibility.

The city of Leningrad was finally free in the end of January 1944. Freedom had cost too much for the citizens. The streets of the majestic city fanned with the revolution breath, washed by heroic defenders` sweat and blood were free from the blockade!

# The beginning of the Leningrad’s siege.

Hitlerite Wehrmacht had its own plans for Leningrad. It was a strategic point in attacking Moscow. Leningrad assumed some importance in view of supplying the Hitlerite army with supplies by sea. Hitlerites thought to strike right into the “heart” of the Soviet. Leningrad was the perfect place, because it was the cradle of ‘“The great October Revolution”, the city of most glorious revolutionaries, military and good practices. That is why the Wehrmacht board was constantly demanding a new and more powerful forces appointed towards capturing the city of Leningrad.

In August 1941 Hitler announced that the city of Leningrad and the Russian coast of Baltic Sea were the first attain aims because there were quite a few industrial enterprises ashore and Leningrad itself held a unique ultraheavy tanks manufacture. Russian fleet on Baltic Sea elimination was not the least valuable task for Hitler.

The people of Leningrad had to face two Finnish armies – “The Southeast Army” and “The Karelian Army”. The Southeast Army was to destroy the Soviet troops on The Karelian Isthmus to break through to Leningrad from the north. The Karelian Army had received the order to lead an assault between Lake Ladoga (or Ladozhskoye Ozero) and Lake Onega to make way to River Svir and join forces with the German "North" troops to destroy the Soviet detached units located to the East of Leningrad.

Adolf Hitler was so self-confident in the victory that he declared: « We are to be in Petersburg within three weeks!»

When the war was just at the beginning Leningrad was far away from the hot spots. The attacks were mainly pointed to the western frontier areas. Hitlerite attempted to subject the city to coventrate hence they failed to. The “Protection Against Aircraft” of the city of Leningrad worked perfectly. That time Leningrad had its first there “Heroes of Soviet Union” come into light, they were the three fighter pilots:

* Kharitonov Petr Timofeevich, a sub-lieutenant and a fighter pilot
* Zdorovczev Sergey Ivanovich, a 158-th fighter aviation regiment squad commander, (a 39-th fighter division), a sub-lieutenant
* Zhukov Mikhail Petrovich, a pilot [[6]](#footnote-6)

This distinguished title was conferred to them on July 8, 1941.

In June 1941 the War Front Council approved the defense plan of southwest approaches to the city of Leningrad and made a swift decision to start engineering works on the set boundaries under the reports of Front Deputy Commander in Chief, the Lieutenant General, Konstantin Pavlovich Pjadishev. It had been decided to build three defensive boundaries involving the citizens of Leningrad and people from the neighboring areas. The three defensive boundaries were located at:

* The first was along the entire length of the Lucha River, towards Shimsk through to Ilmen Lake in the Volga delta with developed and strengthened forward defensive positions beginning at the River Plussa.
* The second was along the line Peterhof – Krasnogvorgeysk- Kaspino.
* The third was in the Avtovo area, the district railway - Predportovaya station – Srednyaya Rogatka – Ribatskaya village.

There was created a large number of various engineering constructions, including five hundred and seventy permanent fire positions and earth-and-timber emplacements, one hundred and sixty kilometers of escarpments, ninety four kilometers of ant - vehicular ditches.

Front Deputy Commander in Chief, the Lieutenant General, Konstantin Pavlovich Pjadishev was in charge of the defensive line called the “Luzskaya operational team”[[7]](#footnote-7).

State Defense Committee created the headquarters of the Northwest, Western and Southwest directions in July 1941 to make contact and work more efficiently. The Northwest commander-in-chief of the armed forces was Voroshilov Kliment Efremovich, the Marshal of the Soviet Union. He was in charge of Northern and Northwest fronts, as well as forces of Baltic and Northern fleet.

Hitlerite troops were forced to seize the siege with the help of persistent resistance of the Soviet forces on the Luga boundary and the counterstroke in the district of the Solup city on July 19-th. Hitler ordered to continue moving towards the city of Leningrad only when the eighteenth army would join with the fourth pure tank force and its east flank would be supported by the forces of the sixteen armies.

The German troop’s assault delay provided the Soviet command with almost a month to prepare a strong defense on the Luga defensive boundaries and to conduct more thoroughly building up fortifications at the direct approaches to the city of Leningrad.

Meanwhile, the "North" group of armies received Hitler's order to continue the assault towards the city of Leningrad, making the main hit between Lake Ilmen and Narva to surround Leningrad and to join with the Finnish army. The order came on July 30-th.

Hitlerite board in command rearranged the forces located on the southwest approaches to the city of Leningrad to create three main attack forces:

- Northern main attack force – it was responsible for attacking Leningrad through the Konorskoe plat, Krasnogvardeysk,

- Luga main attack force, it was responsible for attacking Leningrad from the South along the Luga highway,

- Southern main attack force, was responsible for attacking Leningrad from the East to join in with the Finish troops cut all the possible ways of communications with the “mainland”. The idea was to attack Leningrad from the Novgorod-Chudskoe direction.

The enemy`s domination in the air was working to their benefit. Finns troops went on assaulting Petrozavodsk and Olonetskiy directions strengthening their superiority over Seventh army forces three times on September 4-th. The Soviet forces were having hard tactical defense here throughout all September. But the enemy`s forces exceeded too much the Soviet and on September 10-th the Finns troops made their break through to the River Svir, and on October 2-nd the Soviet troops abandoned Petrozavodsk.

To accelerate the capture of the city of Leningrad Hitler used more and more people and military forces. He even suspended further movement of the group of armies called "Center" towards Moscow on August 15-th. Hitler ordered to transfer from the third pure tank force to the group of armies called "North" the major part of movable joints such as one armored and one motor-operated division.

The State Committee of Defense was united with the Main command of the Northwest direction and the city of Leningrad front command In August.

Mga railway station, a link between Leningrad and the “main land” was captured by the enemies in Augus when they made their way through to Neva River. To block Leningrad from the land the Germans occupied Shlisselburg on September 8-th. This was the beginning of the fight over the city of Leningrad, the most heroic and the most tragic siege on the pages of The Great Patriotic War of Soviet Union history.

# Leningrad besieged.

Leningrad was deepened into the dark days filled with uncertainness, fear and unexpectedness: the attacks from the aircraft became more frequent, fires were breaking out and that was the most horrible food supplies were beginning to come to an end. Germans had occupied the last railway connecting Leningrad to the “main land”. There were countable on fingers number of vehicles that were able to deliver food supplies by the lake and they were under enemy’s` aviation constant hits.

Food supplies were cut short. The individual portions were lowered to 1/3 of the daily amount necessary for an adult to stay alive, if it is possible to say “alive”, by November. Starving people had to catch and do their best to prepare eatable dishes made of local dogs, cats, horses, rats and crows. They were the main sourse of meat on many dinner tables. However some people went insane of hunger and some reports of cannibalism were beaming in the papers. Thousands of hungry citizens died – proximately eleven thousand died in November increasing to fifty three thousand people in December. The earth was solid frozen meaning that dead people could not be buried properly. Corpses were everywhere on the city's streets, in the parks and other open areas.

The enemy was building his scheme towards the city yet the citizens of Leningrad were also building, but building a different thing – they were working hard to transform the city into a fortress. Thousands of people were making defensive constructions to rebuild factories and stores, was well as streets and city areas into a firewall. Town people and farmers from nearest suburbs were collectively working to create in short terms a defensive belt of anti-tank ditches approximately six hundred and twenty six kilometers in length of 626, built fifteen thousand pillboxes and earth-and-timber emplacements and thirty five kilometers of barricades.

Most of the brave participants were in a close proximity to the enemy and were exposed to heavy gun-fire at the building site. People had been working for fourteen hours; it was a back breaking task, because the weather did not work as an ally for that time, quite often it was raining, the wind was freezing and constant air strikes did not make life easy. This job demanded enormous physical endurance.

Grave peril hung menacingly over the Soviet lands. The cannon thunder was coming closer with each day yet it did not frighten the defenders of the city only hurried them up to finish the task.

People showed incredible power of cooperation and strong enthusiasm working together without sleep, food, and rest only with the will.

The Kirov factory was too close to the enemy`s troops for comfort. Thousands of workers and ordinary people were working day and night to build up defensive fortifications to protect the native city and the factory. Trenches were dug, posts were put, bombardment tools and machine guns sectors were cleared and ways to the building were mined.

The factory was working twenty four seven to manufacture tanks which had shown its superiority over Germans` in the field. Everyone, no matter whether he or she was a worker, a qualified or not qualifies specialist, a strong man or a housewife, even teenagers worked at the machine tools with persistent and great desire to help protect the native land, factory and the city of Leningrad. Production facilities were under heavy bombardment, fires broke out everywhere, it was a living heel yet nobody ever left their workplace, everybody stood to their ground. The factory produced and let out into the field the “Kliment Voroshilov Tanks” better known as “KB-1” [[8]](#footnote-8)

The working conditions were beyond comfort. The combat materials were produced at the Leningrad enterprises exponentially. During the blockade days, especially in November and December the number of manufactured shells and mines exceeded one million pieces per month.

Soldiers and citizens had been working hard to stop Hitlerite troops from entering the city of Leningrad. If the worst should happen and the Hitlerite troops should break through the defense systems, there had been developed a detailed plan to eliminate the enemy`s troops.

Streets and crossroads of the city were dotted with barricades, anti-tank obstacles the about twenty five kilometers in length, four thousand and one hundred pillboxes and earth-and-timber emplacements were erected, more than twenty thousand firing-points were set nearby buildings. Factories, bridges, public buildings had been mined and would have gone off with one press of a button showering the enemy with the heaps of stones and iron, as well as bulks of metal and stones would block their tanks to go any further. Citizens of the city of Leningrad were ready for street fights.

People of Leningrad were anxious to hear the news from the “Fifty Fourth Army” attacking from the East. This army was a legend! They were to break through the blockade Mga site to let the people of Leningrad get a lungful of fresh air and bу finally free.

However time went by, no news coming from the Fifty Fourth Army” and hopes began to die away.

Desperateу times claim for desperate measures. The “Fifty Fourth Army” ought to act quickly. It took seven days for the Germans to take over Shlisselburg, The Hitlerite troops could not refresh their forces on that short notice to create strong defense throughout forty kilometers along the Mga - Shlisselburg area. That was our chance and the Soviet military commanders demanded from Soviet Union Marshal Grigory Ivanovich Kulik [[9]](#footnote-9) to start the counter attack as soon as possible. However the commander did not hasten, acting only by artillery bombardment aimed to the enemy’s` positions. Late and poorly arranged attack of the “Fifty Fourth Army” ended as a failure. Though “Fifty Fourth Army” stopped, paralyzed at some point and slowed down the enemy to make it easier for the Soviet troops to move ahead protecting southern approaches to Leningrad, yet the main task from the Soviet military commanders to raise the blockade of Leningrad was not achieved.

The “Leningrad Front” was formed in 1941 when the German approached the city of Leningrad dividing the “Northern Front” into the “Leningrad Front” and “Karelian Front” on August 27, 1941 [[10]](#footnote-10) The “Leningrad Front” endured severe losses and was strangled by the blockade, however, they were not defeated, moreover they were in a position like a spring ready to fire. A very dangerous position!

The first battle period for Leningrad had not shown any desirable results, the purpose was far beyond reach and time had been irrevocably lost. Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb[[11]](#footnote-11), was in command of the “Army Group North” and was responsible for the northern sector in “Operation Barbarossa” and capturing the city of Leningrad.

Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb was a skilled military man and he understood that his “element of surprise” advantage was coming to an end, and that his army was on the threshold of winter, Russian winter, and “General Winter” is not a good ally! It was foolish to continue the assault, only weakening the army, which was good for Soviet troops and bad for Hitlerite.

Hitler was furious that Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb was walking round the bushes near Leningrad and could not take it over. Hitler suspended Leeb from command of “Army Group North” and appointed to this position Colonel General Georg Karl Friedrich Wilhelm von Küchler[[12]](#footnote-12). Hitler hoped that this new commander would fulfill the task of his predecessor.

Georg Karl Friedrich Wilhelm von Küchler doing his best to please his “master” and to show he was determined to level Leningrad to the ground. He was:

* forcing people starve to death;
* shipwrecking vessels delivering food supplies to the city;
* dropping mines of high explosive capacity by parachutes on the city;
* shelling the city with long distance large caliber projectile.

The Hitlerite battle aircrafts performed twenty three strikes. Basically the city was bombed with incendiary bombs and land mines of high capacity. Often there were fires. There were some “groups of watcher”, totally voluntarily groups, always on duty near the houses entrances, of on roofs. The fires were extinguished by efforts of fire-fighting crews with the active help of the inhabitants from the adjoining houses.

The part of the German aircrafts were having bases on the airdromes closest to the front line allowing the enemy pilots to be swift and be on position in some minutes. Air combats often took place right over the Leningrad. Soviet pilots had exclusive strong character, especially when having spent all the ammunition they went on a head-on approach.

In October Germans were aiming not only at suburbs and southwest areas, but also at the city center. From Strelniy area the enemy was making assaults towards the Vasilevskiy Island. Artillery bombardments often occurred together with the air bombardments especially at night and proceeded for hours.

In the end of September the Hitlerite began to dump long-action bombs and mines. Ways of neutralization were unknown and to make it worse the Germans used varied designs of detonators.

German sent their spies and the provokers whose task was to spread among besieged panic and uncertainty, and to report about the destructions and armie`s movements. Using difficulties with supply chains the Hitlerite aircrafts dropped down leaflets appealing to the people`s disobedience to the authorities.

Shlisselburg loss had caused serious difficulties within the city of Leningrad. Ammunition, food supplies, gasoline and medicines had stopped yet the enemy was approaching. The wounded evacuation had stopped thought the incoming rate from the fields was getting more and more every minute. Universities, institute named after Herzen, club houses, Schools of Technology, hotels "European" and "Angleter" and other were turned into hospital facilities. Additional positive conditions created by the city board affected well the recovery of the wounded and their returning into action.

Leningrad began to lack the electric power from the first days of the siege. There was no fuel. There was a rigid limit of current consumption for all enterprises and for needs of the people since September. To have a reserved power supply for the main factories, two powerful turbo-electric vessels were used to, provided with full stock of fuel and settled in proper places on Neva River.

Water pipe repair brigades were also on duty in a case of pipe damages hence the Hitlerite troops did not manage to put out the city`s water supply.

The enemy went ahead to send more air attacks on the city. That was scary however the citizens asked not to set off the alarm and make the workers do their job, as mass derivation of workers had led to bigger damage. The decision was accepted that if there is only one or two planes in the sky the alarm must not be declared. Workers insisted that the work ought to be performed no matter what if there is no direct threat to the factory. It was necessary to take the chances because the army demanded the weapon.

Soviet aircrafts conducted supervision over the area of enemy`s heavy batteries prospective positions. Gunners marked the site of the enemy`s tools by their first shoot and opened reciprocal fire to let the city rest from then city bombardment.

The population of the city consisted of two millions and five hundred and forty four thousand civilian persons, including almost four thousand children. . Mass citizens` evacuation begun only in January 1942 on ice road. People evacuation during the war time on the initial stage was slowed down, undoubtedly because of considerable quantity of children, women, old men and sick people remained in the besieged city, created additional difficulties.

There was an inventory of all edibles, nowt, birds and wheat on the first week of September. The amount of food supplies was short yet that was something.

There were food-cards in Leningrad starting from the first days of September. In order to economy the food stuff dining rooms, restaurants and other points of public catering were getting closed. No expense of products over the established limit is allowed only with the special permission from the Soviet Supreme body.

During the whole period of siege the Hitlerite had not managed to cause serious damage to food supplies stocks, except for a small amount of a flour and sugar loss in the fire which broke in the warehouses named after Badaev. However the city of Leningrad needed more food supplies.

Other disasters made their way towards Leningrad. There were sever winter and snow and frost broke out in November. The temperature was way beyond minus forty degrees below zero. Water and sewer pipes had frozen, people were left without water supplied and soon fuel was coming to an end. Power stations had ceased to work, light had gone out in the houses, and internal walls of apartments had been covered with hoarfrost.

Citizens of Leningrad started to establish indoors temporary barracks iron ovens and deducing pipes through the window. People used tables, chairs, shelves and bookcases, sofas, parquet tiles, and then the book to keep warm and cook some food. Yet this fuel was sufficed for a short period of time. Families went into oblivion because of the cold and hunger.

The city appeared to be in ice trap by December 1941. Streets and the neighboring areas were covered with ice. The snow was so high that it closed the ground floors of houses.

No matter what had happened the city had been living and struggling..

Despite peoples` heroism and courage their position in the besieged Leningrad was getting every day from bad to worse. Food supplies went short even in terms of strict economy somewhere in the neighborhood of November 20-th 1941. Bread supplies would be enough only for a few days.

Under instructions from the State Committee of Defense the Council of war of the Leningrad front had begun all-round long term preparation for building a military-highway through Lake Ladoga. Council of war of the Leningrad front signed the order to organize transportation across Lake Ladoga and, about lining an ice road, its protection and defense on November 19-th.

# Leningrad siege break through.

In the end of November, 1942 the Council of war of the Leningrad front, reporting to the Soviet Headquarters pointed the main tasks of the armies was the siege break through.

In December, 1942 the Soviet Headquarters confirmed the Volkhov and Leningrad fronts’ operation plan. The operation readiness was defined by January 1-st 1943; it was named for that time being “The Spark”. The front actions coordinators were the Soviet Union Marshal Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov and the General Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov.

The break through point of the siege was selected a narrow Shlisselburgsko-sinjavsky ledge [[13]](#footnote-13) dividing the fronts of the armies. The Supreme Commander decided to cut off the ledge by a counter blow to return it to the city of Leningrad communication with the country by land.

The enemy troops prepared a long-term all-round defense of the front on the East, North and West on Shlisselburgsko-sinjavskom ledge.

Leningrad front and Volkhov`s armies were supposed to break through the long-term, strongly arranged enemy`s defense under heavily snow winter conditions. The striking force of the Leningrad front was the sixty seventh army under command of the major general Duhanov Mikhail Pavlovich. . The main strike was performed by the two hundred and sixty eight and one hundred and thirty six rifle divisions where the enemy was least prepared in the engineering relation considering the defense system.

The Volkhov front commander was General Kirill Afanasievich Meretskov allocated second striking army to Lieutenant General Romanovskiy Vladimir Zakharovich. The southern flank of the striking group of the Volkhov providing with a part force with the eighth army of Major General Starikov Philip Nikonorovich.

There was an extraordinary calmness on either side of Shlisselburgsko-sinjavskogo ledge on December 1942. The armies were getting ready to face the forthcoming hazards.

In the beginning of January 1943 both the Leningrad front and Volkhov front were completely ready to react and move out. The Soviet command was looking for an appropriate moment to make a move near Leningrad. And it had come.

Considering the favorable conditions for Leningrad fronts and Volkhov front The Soviet Headquarters ordered to make a move on January 12-th 1943 to go over to the South of Lake Ladoga to break through the siege of Leningrad.

The morning silence was broken down by a volley of jet mortars called “Katyusha” on January 1943 at nine o'clock thirty minutes. Along the assaulting line of the sixty ninth army the artillery preparation had begun. Shots from almost two thousand weapons and mortars merged into a continuous rumble. The fiery tornado stormed almost for two hours and a half over the defensive systems of the enemy. The long-range fired at close stand objects of the enemy`s artillery army in order not to destroy ice at the left coast of River Neva, the main targets were the artillery batteries, staffs and command points, knots of roads.

As soon as artillery preparation came to an end the alarm rockets went up in the sky. The ice smooth surface of the river was filled with thousands of Soviet soldiers dressed in white camouflage clothes. Ahead with ladders, boards, fascines soldiers of the attacking groups and defensive groups. In five minutes, the main forces went ahead to get all the glory.

Soldiers from the two hundred sixty nine rifle regiment under command of A.I. Sherstnyov successfully moving ahead. It took the battalion under command of the Captain F.I. Sobakin four minutes to come across the River Neva. Hitlerites did not know what had hit them when assault groups rose up on the ice slope to rush forward into the first trench of the enemy. That was the beginning of a fierce hand-to-hand fight.

Soon the attacking divisions occupied the first, and then the second trenches. The roar of the fight moved away from the river bank. The Soviet brave avalanche was making way through by fire, by a bayonet and by a grenade, going further towards to troops of the Volkhov front.

By the end of the first day of the attack, the sixty seventh army had two bases on the left coast of Neva River.

The night of November 13-th both sides spent in preparations. Parts of the ninety sixth and sixty first infantry divisions from the enemy`s side were hastily moving forward. The Soviet side was strengthening positions on the left coast of Neva River. From the right coast headquarters and headquarters troop were crossing the ferry. Part of the long-range artillery was changing its gun positions. Engineering troops started to erect ice crossings to cross by average tanks the ferry of the Neva River.

In the morning divisions of the sixty seventh army went on with the attack trying to seize main centers of resistance to break through the enemy`s flanks in Shlisselburg.

Hitlerites made some fierce counterattacks hence the Soviet troops repelled the assault in January. Soviet troops considerably improved their positions at some separate directions. Both sides used new additional forces in the battle from January 14-th till January 17-th. The infantry force was the main actin force in the battle due to the lack of space and some special conditions of the land.

On January 13-th, in the morning the three thousand and thirtieth rifle regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel G.I. Seredina seized the railway and Southwest suburb of Shlisselburg, and then made an assault to the Preobrazhenskaya Mountain from the South and West directions. By noon the mountain, a part of the city and railway station had been occupied by the Soviet troops.

On the night of January 18-th the commander of the twenty sixth German army decided to disengage the remained troops from Shlisselburg and take them away to Sinjavino. By that time between Leningrad front and Volkhov front remained a narrow corridor, for about two kilometers in width. Hitlerites military commanders understood that there were few hours left before the Shlisselburg military force complete mousetrap. Having left for its cover an infantry force Hitlerites made two counter strikes towards the Soviet troops leading to the Workers settlement number five, Shlisselburg and Sinjavino. By noon divisions of one hundred and sixth rifle division and sixty first tank brigade bypassed the Workers settlement number five from North and South. Few hundred meters were left to meet with the remained to a meeting with the people of the Volhov city.

Soon one hundred and twenty third rifle division occupied the Workers settlement number one. Thus defeating within six days the Hitlerites resistance reaching meeting places with the people of the Volhov city (Workers settlement number five and number one). The sixty seventh armies had fulfilled their main task in the operation.

Overnight into Saturday of January 19-th 1943 the Leningrad radio proudly announced that the siege finally had been broken through!

On January 18-th 1943 when the siege was finally broken through, the State Defense Committee made a decision to foster building of a railway line which would connect Leningrad with the “main land”. In short notice, eighteen days to be more exact, under constant bombardments and artillery attack workers laid the “Shlisselburg - Poliana” railroad line. Its length is about thirty three kilometers. Also they erected a one thousand and three hundred meters arch pile-supported railway crossing through Neva River near Shlisselburg.

On February 7-th, early in the morning citizens of the heroic city enthusiastically welcomed the first train arriving directly from the “main land”. Three thousand and one hundred and four trains passed by the new railway from February till December 1943. Plants and factories in Leningrad` received raw materials and fuel thanks which helped to extend considerably military production release. Leningrad front troops received reinforcements, armament, combat vehicles and ammunition.

# Conclusion

It has passed more than half of a century since Leningrad siege. Even today people all around the world “were”, “are” and “will be” amazed by how could the people of Leningrad sustain and survive such unprecedented struggle in the history of human beings? What was the secret force?

Leningrad sustained and survived the nine hundred days of the siege because its people had been brought up on revolutionaries, combat traditions and good practice. People were ready to protect the city to a bitter end. Citizens survived no matter that there were no fire wood, no coal, the winter was extremely fierce, day and night were cannon bombardments, fires were breaking here and there and what’s more, people were starving. Yet they have survived everything to protect their home city. It had become a civil, national and social debt for them.

Different stories might have told us its monuments and memorials, street names, the names of different areas and quays. Many of them are like scars which always will be like a reminder of harsh lessons and bloody battles. Events of that time have been removed from us for decades. Children who had been born after the war already have their own children; the second generation is growing up. For them Leningrad`s siege is only information written in books, shown in films, in stories told by leaving witnesses of the siege. Time, however, does not extinguish the gratitude feelings from the people who are alive because of those who stopped the hazard at the cost of their lives.

Years go by, but we do not and will never forget the heretical deed of the people who protected Leningrad. Each new generation is aspired to pay the tribute of worship for those legendary heretical deed and the heroes who stood their ground to the very bitter end. They chose glorious death instead slavery.

Hitlerites could not take over Leningrad neither on the spur nor by a siege and starvation. The enemy had been leading fierce siege for twenty nine months. The city had shown its teeth and fought like a real military and war battle field compared to a theatre of war. Leningrad had more than a fair share of hunger, starvation, bombardment, lack of food, warm, humanity yet the city endured and survived. The city and the people did not lost hope and never surrendered.

Hitlerites spirit was seriously undermined and shattered. More than five hundred thousands of Leningrad`s citizen’s men, women, children who wanted to have a life gave their lives to protect our future, because they could not imagine living in bondage, under the heel of the enemy. We can have a normal life thanks to their heroic deeds.

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