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Title: “Remembering the Blockade: Soviet Policy and Wartime Culture in Besieged Leningrad”
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Tanner Billingsley is a senior in IPFW’s Department of History. He is currently completing his senior seminar research project on the memory of the Siege of Leningrad. His current historical interests include the Soviet Union in World War II, the development of Communism in Central Europe, and the Cold War. In his free time, he enjoys reading and traveling. He will graduate in May.

Abstract

The German blockade of Leningrad during World War II resulted in history’s most devastating siege. Hitler’s deliberate plan to starve the city led to the deaths of over a million Leningraders as the city endured nearly nine hundred days of siege, beginning in 1941. While Leningraders worked amidst German bombings to secure their city, Leningrad’s brutal encirclement prevented access to food and other essential resources. Desperate for nourishment, people ate dogs, cats, medicine, soups made from glue and leather, and, in rare instances, each other. The culture of death that permeated the city during the winter of 1941-1942 was poignantly documented in the diaries and memoirs of ordinary Leningraders, as well as in the poetry and music by prominent cultural figures. The blockade became an important component of the regime’s later glorification of the war, with the state’s narrative of the triumphant hero-city often conflicting with the savage realities of suffering, starvation, and death.

Selected Bibliography


