



# Leningrad: State of Siege

*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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