



## Leningrad Under Siege: First-hand Accounts of the Ordeal

*Ales Adamovich , Daniil Granin , Clare Burstall (Translator) , Vladimir Kissel'nikov (Translator)*

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Leningrad was under siege for almost three years, and the first winter of that siege was one of the coldest on record. The Russians had been taken by surprise by the Germans' sudden onslaught in June 1941. This book tells the story of that long, bitter siege in the words of those who were there. It vividly describes how ordinary Leningraders struggled to stay alive and to defend their beloved city in the most appalling conditions. They were bombed, shelled, starved and frozen. They dug tank-traps and trenches, built shelters and fortifications, fought fires, cleared rubble, tended the wounded and, for as long as they had strength to do so, buried their dead. Many were killed by German bombs or shells, but most of them died of hunger and cold. Based on interviews with survivors of the siege and on contemporary diaries and personal memoirs. The primary focus is on three people: a young mother with two small children, a boy of sixteen at the outbreak of war, and an elderly academic. We see the siege through their eyes as its horrors unfold and as they struggle to survive.

## Leningrad Under Siege: First-hand Accounts of the Ordeal Details

Date : Published December 26th 2007 by Pen & Sword Books (first published 1977)

ISBN : 9781844154586

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Format : Hardcover 210 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Cultural, Russia, War, Business, Amazon

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unexpectedly HEAVY I felt after every new portion of the book.

I cringed, though, over almost all author's commentaries about "???????? ?????????? ????", "???????? ??????????????", and all this "??, ?????????????? ?????????? ?????????? ??? ??? ? ??? ? ?????????????? ?????????????, ??????????????. ? ??? ?? ?????????????? ?????????? ?????????????, ?????????? ? ??? ?????????????? ??????????". Fucking shit, there is nothing noble and heroic in dying from hunger! It is the most humiliating and degrading experience, and NOTHING heroic could ever be in people closed in a city without food, water, toilets, heat, with dying children, with larger-than-life struggles over every little crumb of bread... I appreciate that the authors feel respect and pity towards these people, but their struggles over surviving with so much dignity as they could gather is not equal to heroism or patriotic dedication or whatsoever. I hate when such things are called "?????" or "?????" -- the people were just DOOMED to die slowly and in humiliation, and they could not have done anything else WHATSOEVER, regardless of how "heroic" they might have been. Oh well...

Anyway, the book overall left contradictory impressions: on the one hand, I learned from it quite a lot of new information or updated significantly the things I already knew (by the way, that's from here I understood the meaning of the common phrase "????????????? ?????????????"); on the other hand, after finishing the book, you feel some disappointment, because you already know that the authors told you about only a very small part of all the materials they collected, and you do not understand (and even angry about it) how they could ever not publish everything else.

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### **Raina says**

Wow. Quite chilling, these diaries. But amazing, the clarity with which they were written under such extreme conditions.

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### **Stephen Cranney says**

Some pretty brutal true accounts of three people trying to survive through the Siege of Leningrad: an aged archivist who feels a sense of duty to protect the records he's been entrusted with while everybody is dying around him, a young studious boy with a penchant for English literature whose eyesight kept him out of the army, and a young single mother with two children who loses her ration card and has to feed her nursing child by pricking herself. Suffice it to say this was difficult to finish.

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### **Ilya Ivanov says**

In English translation it's called "Leningrad Under Siege: First-Hand Accounts of the Ordeal". Two parts, first one is series of interviews with survivors and comments from the authors. Part two is much better, it's based on three diaries written during the actual events. In the book about one of the most inhumane events of XX century (number of hunger and bombardment casualties, according to different estimates, is somewhere between 800.000 and 1.500.000 people), most memorable moments are the ones that stand out from relentless suffering: tours around evacuated Hermitage museum, where guides were talking about pictures that used to be in now empty frames. About the elephant in the zoo that was killed in one of the first bombardments, and how everyone was sorry that the elephant was buried. About the boy who won a big bank in a card game, but was ashamed to demand his winnings from his friends.

