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While interviewing the siege survivors and working on our collection we were questioned and we also were questioning ourselves, whether the siege of Leningrad can be defined as a uniquely specific period in the history of Russian war time culture. Certainly, the heroic defense of Leningrad and the theme of the siege are inalienable components of the Soviet war-time culture. But the opposite is also correct: the theme of the Great Patriotic War constitutes an important segment of the Siege thematics, yet the overall contents of the culture that had been developed in the city of Leningrad during the blockade cannot be identified with it. Giving additional emphasis to temporal and spatial characteristics of the blockade, one can argue that the Leningraders who spent nearly three years in isolation from the outer world (Bol'shaia zemlia in their siege dialect), were given no other option but to structure their individual experiences and daily habits by models comparable to those the prisoners of Jewish ghettos had worked out for their survival. However, here again, forms of representation of inner and outer worlds, as well as the experience of living in isolation from human universe and from social contacts with the mainland were not identical with the feelings of the ghetto survivors.

The 900-day siege of three million humans had brought about new standards of living and new forms of cultural representation of endurance, resistance, submissiveness, inventiveness, creativity, and victory. To treat the phenomenon known as the culture of the blockade, we have to begin with the definition of culture that would commensurate to different varieties of individual behavioral practices and collective experiences that were manifested in the life of Leningrad during the war. We have to take into account a

complex, multilayered and copenetrative system of correlations between such phenomenological concepts as “living within and outside of a protected, sheltered / defenseless, open space”; we have to trace relationships between collective representations (We as a people) and the inner world of an individual psyche (my “I”). Further, we have to describe the labyrinthal path that leads through chronotopic (spacio-temporal) interpretations of such semantic units as: a room, an apartment house – home; our native home – our city; home and city as my own and our common birthplace; native home and and native city as they look now, as they are imprinted in our memories, as they used to be located within the framework whose limits go beyond the boundaries of past and present, and therefore provide constituent components for various imaged forms of future, universe, and eternity.

Treating culture as a multitude of various behavioral manifestations (a sum of collective practical, working, intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, social and interhuman experiences) that coexist simultaneously, we can better understand what distinguishes one cultural phenomenon from the other and then define the most distinct, dominant features of the war-time existence in the besieged city of Leningrad.

The siege had generated new practical skills of mutual support, help and salvation. Through these interhuman enactments the notion of brotherhood and sisterhood had regained its old communal meaning. In Leningrad the people and the city had become reintegrated into one big nest, and this common place of nativity was viewed as an organism that strove to reinforce the living bond to its soul, its genius loci. Viewed “both in its unity and its complexity,” the image of the city (Gaston Bachelard’s “house” and Antsiferov’s *dusha goroda*) became a “privileged entity” for its citizens, and phrases:

“my Leningrad - my Petersburg; my home city - my own self; “we - the city of Leningrad” not only gave expression to people’s living memories, but infused autovalorization to their desperate personal experiences of Blokadniki.¹ Continuing with the main assertions of Bachelard’s topoanalysis, one may suggest that during the war the city of Leningrad turned out to be “one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories,” cultural feelings and worldviews of its people

During the siege of Leningrad, as well as in other extreme situations that developed on the territories allotted for forcible isolation of large human collectives (prison camps, Jewish ghettos) individual memories exerted a strong cultural, therapeutic, salvific impact on peoples’ lives. An in-depth topoanalysis of these enclosed places enables one to draw distinctions between typology and specificity of cultures that emerge in extreme situations of forcible isolation of large human collectives. From the position of topoanalysis it becomes clear that in such extreme situations individual memories exerted a strong creative, therapeutic, salvific impact on peoples’ lives. (1) Homes and houses people were forced to abandon remained indelible within them and were viewed as spaces in which individuals used to share positive emotions and enjoy social intercourse. (2) The imagination of a besieged person, rather than being nostalgic, transcended the barriers between past, present and future; between the inner space of one’s psyche and the outer world that included interhuman “I” to “I” and broader social contacts. (3) People’s memory has able to refigure distinctions between immortally perfect aesthetic images and mundane, perishable objects from their war-time surroundings. Nonaesthetic objects, implements and paraphernalia of daily life became aestheticized and were given

¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how We Experience Intimate Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 3, 6.

a distinct ideational interpretation. Passing through the ordeals of the blockade, people made creative efforts to reconstitute themselves and their immediate surroundings, to ennoble the value of mundane reality through the forms of perception that museified their day-to-day experience and sanctioned their human values for the future. (4) From topoanalytical position, the besieged city of Leningrad is a spatio-temporal entity within which the basic indicators of extopy (vnenakhodimost') -- "there" and "then"-- flew around (circumundulated) the primary markers of an interior: "here" and "now." The besieged Leningraders were insulted and horrified; they suffered in their cold, dark, ruined rooms that did not look anymore like apartment houses, but could pass for Zamyatin's "Caves" Yet still the imaged concept of the majestic city of the Bronze Horseman, remained indelible within them, and the more outspoken and nondisguized the testimony of ruinous devastation, the greater was an effort to remember, to preserve and protect that what once was and still used to be their Petersburg, their native home, the center of their universe.

The well-known emblems of their city: the Admiralty, the Bronze Horseman, cityscapes and interiors occupied a special place in their daily existence. People strived to preserve the image of their pre-war surroundings not as a relic, but as a component of reality; they relied on their memory, capable of ennobling the authentic image of their home city with its past grandeur and they projected this composita onto the future, thus securing for themselves a deserved place in life, in the restored, rebuilt Petersburg-Leningrad. People undertook many courageous efforts to protect the most memorable objects from destruction. They focused their energies on material objects – architectural

monuments and statues, yet in result the sensation of auto-valorization grew stronger, and through contacts with genius loci, their human integrity was saved.

To illustrate this point by examples that do not necessarily represent extraordinary aesthetic achievements but rather characterize the culture of the blockade. Mikhail Bobrov's memoir *Zapiski blokadnogo al'pinista* is given a revealing heading: *Khraniteli angela*.² The author's attention is shifted from the mythological agent - guardian angel (angel-khranitel') to human subjects – four young mountain climbers³ who during the siege of Leningrad were assigned to watch over and to camouflage the glorious relics of Petersburg history — the golden weather-vane shaped as a sailing vessel on the top of the Admiralty, the cupola of the Isaaky Cathedral, the spire of the Engineering Castle, and the Golden Angel at the top of the Peter-Paul Cathedral. Bobrov epigraphed his memoir with a quatrain from Vadim Shefner: “Наберу высоту — и мгновенно /из простора, где звёзды горят,/ Разгляжу я столицу вселенной: / Петербург-Петроград-Ленинград». Shefner's poetic stance helped Bobrov to identify his native city as the center of universe.

In his narrative poem *The Horseman* (July 1945, publ. *Zvezda*, 1: 1946) Sergei Spassky addressed another venerable object, the Bronze Horseman monument. During the siege the statue was covered by a wooden hood and a pile of sand, like a casket. Spassky treats this protective measurement as materialized metaphors for entombment, raising from the dead, and immortality. Using direct and inverted allusions to Pushkin, he describes two scenes at the Neva embankment in front of the statue. The first takes place

² M. M. Bobrov, *Khraniteli angela. Zapiski blokadnogo al'pinista* (St. Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo universiteta profsoiuzov, 1998).

³ Ol'ga Firsova (siege survivor and war veteran), Aleksandra Prigozheva (1920-1942, died during the siege), Aloiz Zemba (1913-1942, died from starvation in Leningrad), and Mikhail Bobrov (born 1923, lives in St. Petersburg).

in March 1942: «Еще корою земляной / укрыт был Всадник./ Год блокады.» Like Pushkin's Evgenii, a young girl tries to cross the Neva to visit the mother of her fiancé (his name is Petr). Yet the bridge is under the fire and she is forced to stay right in front of the Senate building: Ну прямо в центре урагана./ Жди, да по сторонам смотри.- / Так бормотала у кургана / Она, где Петр укрыт внутри. / И тут подходит к ней, кивая, / Боец, стоявший на посту / у памятника. / - Что? Живая? / Ишь лупят нынче по мосту! / –Тут стережешь? / -Да, по приказу / сюда направлен я с утра... / Жаль не видал его ни разу.../ -Кого? / - Да этого Петра. / Хоть раз бы глянуть.... / - Неужели / Не видел? / – Нет. Поди, высок. / Пожалуй, танка потяжеле. / Вон как горой лежит песок.

Touched by an uninformedness of her interlocutor, the girl starts browsing in her memory: Мне бы хотелось / Понятье дать, каков на вид... / Но знаешь, главное, чтоб целость / Он сохранил ... / А конь-то взвиг... / А сам-то он рванул уздечку! / Ну, прямо видишь наяву / Вдруг , будто маленькую речку, / Он всю перелетит Неву. / С таким бы в бой / Конец бывает всяким войнам, / И из песчанного холма / Он выйдет, встанет пред глазами, / Опять его увидим сами,- /Поймешь тогда, кого стерег.

Three years later, shortly before the end of the war, the same girl, immersed in her thoughts, walks along the same embankment, and is brought back to reality by a joyous noise: Что за гомон? / Шумят, толпятся, крик ребят. / Стучат, как будто в доски ломом, / Да это же его на волю / ... высвобождают. / - Я же здесь спасалась. / как же я позволю, / Чтоб без меня? – she grabs the shovel, joins the rescue workers, and soon the statue of a hero reappears in front of their eyes: И как бы в лик России глядя, /

Она, невольно вздрогнув вдруг, / Шепнула, чуть коня погладя: / «Мы победили. /
Здравствуй, друг» Вот он парит в вечернем свете, / Стремясь вперед, поправ
змею. / Мы в обновляющемся мире. / Нам жить, работать и любить. / Земля родней
нам, небо шире теперь. / А как с рассказом быть? / Воображенье обнимало / Меня,
и отбивал я такт. / Но не прибавил я нимало / Все это /— вправду было так.

Centered on the heroic theme of the defense of Petersburg-Leningrad, this rather mediocre optimistic tale meets the requirements of Socialist realism; other works of Leningrad lyrical poets, however, allowed for an outspoken tragic stance. Vadim Shefner, who fought in Leningrad front, and contributed to the city's eponymous journal, viewed the entire space of a suburb Dachnoe as one waste necropolis with no graves and no gravestones. In 1943 he wrote his memorial poem "Wilde Roses":

Здесь фундаментов камень в песок

перемолот войной,

.....

Ни домов, ни травы, ни заборов,

ни улицы нет,

.....

Но шиповника куст — не с того ль,

что он крови под цвет,—

Уцелел,— и цветет среди мусора,

щебня и праха.

Стисни зубы и молча пройди

по печальным местам,
Мсти за павших в бою, забывая и страх
и усталость.
А могил не ищи....
Предоставь это дело цветам,—
Всё видали они, и цвести им недолго
осталось.
Лепестки опадают....
Средь этих изрытых дорог
Раскидает, разметет их ветер беспечный
и шальный;
Но могилу героя отыщет любой лепесток,
Потому что и некуда больше здесь падать,
пожалуй.⁴

In January 1946, six month after the end of the war and six months prior to the infamous Zhdanov's assault at the Leningrad literary journals, Pavel Antokol'sky published in *Zvezda* his poetic lament "Maiden – the Turbid Woe" ("Deva –Obida") He started the poem following the pattern of the *Lay of Igor's Campaign*:

Дева-Обида, надежда моя!
Где же ты? Встань! Сосчитай
убиенных.

⁴ Вадим Шефнер; *Стихи о Ленинграде* (Л.: Лениздат, 1967), 15.

and concluded in a manner similar to Akhmatova's keenings:

Участь высокая не тяжела.

Люди пошли на мученья и беды,

Только бы дважды и трижды жила

Дева-Обида — сестра Победы.

Antokol'sky (a Moscow poet) wrote this work as a conclusion for his cycle of six war-time poems "Iron and Fire Once Again" ("Eshche raz Zhelezo i Ogon'," 1944-45, published in *Znamia*, Moscow). The first part, *Zhelezo i Ogon'*, opened by a 1941 odic epistle "Poslanie v Leningrad," later "Mednyi Vsadnik," was also published in Moscow in 1942. However by the end of 1945 when "Deva-Obida" was submitted to *Znamia*, it was rejected there, and Antokol'sky sent this tragic incantation to *Zvezda* in Leningrad.

During the Siege, the need for self-expression and cultural survival inspired people to organize picture and poster exhibitions, to maintain diaries, to start with local memorial museums that enshrined various nonaesthetic, but memorable material survivals of their daily life. Notion of cultural preservation took on different forms in various artifacts produced by the besieged Leningraders. Here is a watercolor "Our Summer-house" sketched from the memory by a third-grade school-girl Zhenya Shavrova and dated September 10, 1941 – as if she had a presentiment what horrible ordeals she and her mother were doomed to undergo in the days to come. On the reverse side of the water color Zhenya's younger sister added her comment: К этому времени Сиверская была , which is exactly the point I want to make: During the blockade, the besieged people derived their strength from the belief that for as long as a landscape, a city scape,

an interior, a human face survived in their memory it continues with living, it is not destroyed or annihilated.

Elena Martilla, 18 years old: portrait of her teacher Shablovsky (the background figure of wounded soldier assisted by a young nurse represents symbolically the losses of the Siege); “Tavrichesky school for Fine Arts” (the only one that remained open during the winter 41-42). In her interior, Martilla places naked ancient statues next to burzhuika stove; “New Year celebration, 1942” (three women wrapped in blankets and a young man listen to the record player; in the background one can see a teapot at burzhuika plate). Not only hot tea, but music as well makes them feel warmer.

Attention to material objects provided the authors with means of expressing their pain of losses and their despair. In his 1942 poem “The Mirror” Vadim Shefner mourned for a devastated abode of people’s peaceful pre-war days:

Как бы ударом страшного тарана
Здесь половина дома снесена
И в облаках морозного тумана
Обугленная висится стена.
.....
И пусть я все забуду остальное —
Мне не забыть, как на ветру дрожа,
Висит над бездной зеркало стенное
На высоте шестого этажа.
Оно каким-то чудом не разбилось,

Убиты люди, стены сметены,—
Оно висит, судьбы слепая милость,
Над пропастью печали и войны.

Свидетель довоенного уюта,
На сыростью изъеденной стене
Тепло дыханья и улыбку чью-то
Оно хранит в стеклянной глубине.⁵

..

People faced death as a daily occurrence. Rather than varnishing reality or depicting death as a heroic sacrifice for the sake of the Motherland, professional and nonprofessional authors of the besieged city had “familiarized” their own abnormal position vis -a -vis death.⁶ They fearlessly related on how their loved ones were left unburied among the piles of frozen corpses or were thrown into the mass graves. Their drawings showed morgues filled with deformed emaciated bodies and city gardens transformed into mass-graves. As if they were doctors, artists and poets had learned how to recognize lethal symptoms of starvation. Vera Inber wrote in her poem *Пулковский меридиан* (1941-43):

Как тягостно и, главное, как скоро
Теперь стареют лица! Их черты

⁵ Там же, 11.

⁶ This term has been used by Olga Meerson in her book *Dostoevsky's Taboos* (Dresden, München: Dresden University Press, 1998), 87-88. The term is built as the opposite to that of Shklovsky's *ostranennie*, or “defamiliarization.”

Доведены до птичьей остроты
Как бы рукой зловещего гримёра:
Подбавил пепла, подмешал свинца,-
И человек похож на мертвеца.

In her poem Inber preposterously avoids personifications, and her metonymies “ashes” and “led” bring about the notion of terminating life. A poet, she continues in the manner of a pathologist: *лицо из воска, отек лица; апатия... Все перечни и признаки сухие / Того, что по-ученому врачи зовут «элементарной дистрофией», / И что — не латинист и не филолог— / Определяет русским словом – голод.*⁷

Because of starvation, Inber says, people hallucinated and dreamed fresh loafs of bread In their dreams women saw their children and grandchildren rosy-cheeked and healthy, and their awakening to reality of the siege was horrific. Inber writes about frozen and broken water towers and water pipes:

В системе фильтров есть такое сито —
Прозрачная стальная кисея,
Мельчайшее из всех. Вот так и я
Стараюсь удержать песчинки быта,
Чтобы в текучей памяти людской
Они б осели, как песок морской.

⁷ Вера Инбер, *Пулковский меридиан* (Москва: ОГИЗ, 1944), 14-15;

Throughout her poem, she uses pronominal forms “They” - “I”-“We”- interchangeably, and a reader co-experiences the reality of the siege with the city dwellers.

In Leningrad people spoke of death matter-of-factly, and mentioned the unmentionable with no trepidation. Uplifting of taboos and unwillingness to be refrained from recognizing death in its numerous manifestations had made literary and artistic culture of the siege quite unique and absolutely unprecedented for culture and poetics of Socialist realism. Through the entire period of 1941-46 (until the onset of Zhdanovshchina), the fundamental distinction between the culture of the siege and the war-time culture goes along the border line of uplifted - preserved cultural taboos.⁸ The more widespread is the unwillingness to use taboos, the greater is the resistance at the level of aesthetics and history of culture to partial anesthesia and amnesia; the stronger is the need for preserving this daily life in the memory of the humanity. The more general are the depictions, the weaker is the author’s understanding of the tragedy. Devoid of individuation, an artistic work loses its links with specific cultural phenomena (the culture of the siege) and becomes a component of the official Soviet war-time culture. To paraphrase Gaston Bachelard, one may state that in the situation of isolation from the outer world poets who contributed to the culture of the blockade “maintained their intimacy with the universe by moving from a concentrated to an expanded” space / universe, whereas the official Soviet culture was completely deprived of this form of world perception.⁹

Take, for instance, Nikolai Tikhonov’s poem “Kirov s nami” (published in Pravda, Dec. 1, 1941). He begins in imitation of Lermontov’s “Vozdushnyi korabl” ,

⁸ Boris Slutsky wrote his poems about the Soviet soldiers in the Nazi KZ far later, and his works remained unknown to the readers until the beginning of the Thaw.

⁹ Gaston Bachelard, 66.

but somehow inadvertently to himself, deviates from the balladic pattern, and approaches, emotionally and rhythmically a doggerel

Под грохот полночных снарядов,
В полночный воздушный налет,
В железных ночах Ленинграда
По городу Киров идет
В шинели армейской походной
Как будто полков впереди,
Идет он тем шагом свободным,
Каким он в сраженьи ходил.

.....

Пусть красное пламя снаряда
Не раз полыхало в цехах,
Работай на совесть, как надо,
Гони и усталость и страх

Пусть наши супы водяные,
Пусть хлеб на вес золота стал,
Мы будем стоять как стальные,
Потом мы успеем устать

.....

В железных ночах Ленинграда

По городу Киров идет,
И сердце прегордое радо,
Что так непреклонен народ
.....
И в ярости злой канонады
Немецкую гробить орду
В железных ночах Ленинграда
На бой лениградцы идут..¹⁰

Tikhonov transforms Lermontov's solemn romantism into stilted, formulaic Soviet patriotism. His repeatable use an imperative *pust'* (let it, let us, let them) postulates the requirement of human sacrifice for the sake of the great Cause of Victory. Like heraldic emblems, the names of the Communist heroes and their eponyms, the city and the factory (Leningard, Kirov factory) serve to convey a super-personal, static idea of immortality. Nevertheless, when Tikhonov presented this poem to the workers of Kirov factory in April 1942, the audience met his recital with great emotions, tears, and applaud, and one can easily understand, why. For many months the besieged Leningraders were deprived of contacts with the mainland, and now, while listening to the author's recital, they generously inscribed into his toplofty pathos their genuine feelings of humane selfvalorisation. The benevolent approval given to the poem by the representatives of official culture and by the top figures in the Party nomenclature was even higher and surely more important for Tikhonov himself. Since after 1942 he produced quite a number of works all tailored by the pattern of his Kirov poem, the most

¹⁰ Н. Тихонов, *Стихотворения и поэмы* (Л.: Советский писатель, 1981), 633, 634, 635, 637.

notorious of which, “A Night in Smol’nyi” (1949), introduced as a central hero Andrey Zhdanov, Stalin’s political arm and executor of a retribution over Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* (1946).

In “Kirov is with Us” and in many other works published by Agitprop and Gospolitizdat in Leningrad during the war the defense of the city was treated only as a tributary to the mainstream of official patriotic culture,¹¹ whereas the citizens locked in the besieged city experienced the blockade as the single battle of Life and Death.

Tikhonov’s stilted monumentalism bespeaks the standard Soviet predilection to cultural taboos whose main purpose is to hide the truth and to “varnish the reality.” The accepted nomenclature of different cultural institutions in Leningrad was marked with a similar prudery: all memorial museums and exhibitions organized by district libraries, high schools and factories were named *blokadnye*, yet the general heading under which the siege experience entered the official theme of patriotic defense was “Oboronnaia tema,” hence the name of the institution was “Museum of the Defense of Leningrad.”

Elements of reality that built the masterplot of the Siege and war-time culture, were, of course, “stringently selected” by party ideology and by censorship. “Workers of cultural front” all contributed to the defense theme and were required to express their unswerving devotion to Comrade Stalin, his leadership and to the great Cause of Victory. But, interesting, browsing through various poems about the war-time Leningrad, one notices that eulogies to Stalin and his genius of a military commander were rather modest there.

¹¹ See on it Aileen Rambow, *Überleben mit Worten: Literatur und Ideologie während der Blockade von Leningrad 1941-1944* (Berlin: Arno Spitz Verlag, 1994), 61-107.

In her four major works (*Fevral'skii dnevnik*, January- February 1942; *Leningradskaia poema*, June-July, 1942; *Pamiati zashchitnikov*, April 1944; *Tvoi put'*, April 1945), as well as in her short lyrical - patriotic poems that were broadcasted by Leningrad radio during the Siege, Olga Berggolts, the famous female keener, mourned over her friends and compatriots devoured by death during the war, yet never mentioned Stalin. In September 1941, few days after the Siege was declared, she forced herself to a compromise and wrote her "Poem about the Bolsheviks of Leningrad." However, in her extorted contribution to the theme of Patriotism, Berggolts stubbornly substituted Lenin for the most expected Stalin's name: Вот опять земля к сынам воззвала, / крикнула: «Вперед, большевики!» / Страдный путь к победе указала / Ленинским движением руки.¹² Berggolts who lost to Stalin's purges her husband (poet Boris Kornilov) and her unborn child (she miscarried during the interrogation in 1938) had regained during the war her tragic feeling of sisterhood and unity with her Motherland (Rodina) In June 1941 she wrote:

Мы давно предчувствовали полыханье

этого трагического дня.

Он пришел. Вот жизнь моя, дыханье.

Родина! Возьми их у меня!

Я и в этот день не позабыла

горьких лет гонения и зла,

но в слепящей вспышке поняла:

¹² Ольга Берггольц, *Ленинградская поэма* (Л., Художественная литература, 1976), 123.

это не со мной — с тобою было. ...

.....

Нет, я ничего не позабыла!

Но была б мертва, осуждена,—

встала бы на зов твой из могилы.

Все б мы встали, а не я одна.¹³

Among the Leningrad poets only Anna Akhmatova surpassed Berggolts in her nonrestraint expression of the tragic.

People were cautious in expressing their reservations about the wise leadership of Comrade Stalin. Even in their private correspondence they used aesopian language and resorted to circumvential descriptions understandable only to close friends or relatives. Take, for example, Mikhail Rufimovich Gabe (1917-84) painter, sculptor, soldier, and a participant in picture exhibitions of artists of the Leningrad front. With severe wounds in his stomach and in his right hand Gabe was transported from the battlefield to the city military hospital. While recovering he exercised his right hand till it regained the necessary professional skills. Since his allowance of a war invalid was quite meager, Gabe found a job as an assistant to sculptor Bogoliubov and carved for him “an arm for a five meter long statue of Stalin.” Making pun with the professional term “delat’ ruku” and “rukodelie” (fancy work) and referring to the fact that his own arm or hand (ruka) was barely saved from amputation, Gabe wrote to his future wife: “See, I am taken for a very handy, fancy arm-maker. Even the Stalin prize winner Bogoliubov invites me to work

¹³ *ibid.*, 115.

arms for him.” (каким высоко квалифицированным рукоделом меня считают)!¹⁴ In his spare time, however, Gabe was busy with his own projects: “I am working now on a Winged Victory, like that of the Admiralty, yet a highly modern one.” In his private correspondence he referred to the bas-relief as “Angel the Victor” (angel pobednyj). This work, together with four other bas-reliefs (Lenin, Stalin, Worker, Pilot,) two sculptural groups, “Nurse Assisting a Wounded Soldier”, “Evacuation of the wounded by harnessed dogs”, and a statuesque of a starving worker (“distrofik”) were exhibited in the Museum of Military Medicine, brought to the Moscow exhibition, returned to Leningrad in May 1944, yet since then his “Winged Victory” had never been exhibited, and its whereabouts are presently unknown.

In the history of Soviet visual arts disappearance of a display from the exposition was not a unique case. Soon after its festive inauguration in 1944 the founders of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad and of its local branches began receiving puzzling and misleading signals. Like many others in Leningrad, they were not able to understand the right direction of the Party “General Line.” On the one hand, as early as January 1944 the City executive Committee (Ispolkom) took a decision to restore the old well known names of the streets in the center of Leningrad, and The Prospect of the 25th of October was given back its old name of Nevsky, the Street of the Third of July becomes Sadovaia, and the Uritsky Square was given back its old name of Dvortsovaia ploshchad’. The leningraders interpreted this symbolic gesture as an expression of the governmental acknowledgement of their contribution to the undying glory of their beloved city and of their Motherland. Soon by return of the University from evacuation in

¹⁴ Б. Сурис, *Больше, чем воспоминанья. Письма ленинградских художников 1941 – 1945* (Санкт-Петербург, 1993), 1: 136.

1944, extraordinary sessions of the Department of Literature and History were called, and scholars were instructed to pay more attention to the heroic Patriotic past and great cultural achievements of the Russian people. In response, the journal *Leningrad* addressed the cream of the cream of Soviet intellectuals. There appeared cultural surveys on the history of Russian literature, essays on the history of famous Petersburg palaces, sculptures, and historical monuments. In 1944 *Leningrad* continued to publish Akhmatova, and one of her oldest friends Mikhail Lozinsky published with *Leningrad* fragments from Dante (he translated the *Purgatory* in 1943 in the besieged city.)¹⁵ And when in November 1944 Nikolai Tikhonov was authorized by Moscow to instruct the members of the Leningrad Writers Union on how to “depict the unique, heroic days of the siege” in our Soviet literature, they find no objections to his talk, and his entire speech was published in the journal *L-d* along with the following augural fable:

A great Italian painter had presented once a mighty Sultan with the canvas of a battle scene. “Your depiction is not true to life,- the Sultan said. - Let’s go out to the yard.” There he called upon his janizary, pointed to a slave, and said: “Run after him and cut his head” – The janizary obeyed. Then the Sultan addressed the painter: “Can you see now, your colors are not bright enough, and your design is not expressive.”¹⁶

In the same year a weekly hour “Writer at the Microphone” (Pisatel’ u mikroфона) was removed from the program of Literature and Drama Department of

¹⁵ For the chronology of Akhmatova’s publications with *Leningrad* in 1941-46 see *Peterburgskii zhurnal*, 1-2:(1993), 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

Leningrad Radio, yet the Leningraders excited by the return of their best loved orchestras and theaters from evacuation and by opportunities of attending evenings of poetry recitals in large city's concert halls paid little attention to it and still were not able to grasp the meaning of "the most determinative ideological moment." As they believed, the 900 days of isolation from the mainland and their ability to endure and survive provided an undisputable assurance in their unswerving dedication to the grandeur of the Common Cause of Soviet Patriotism. In actuality, it was this ability to act independently, in agreement with their conscientious decisions rather than follow the governing precepts from the Kremlin that made them pernicious ideological deviants in the eyes of Stalin. The new post-war reality did not need any individual discourse manifestations, neither could it tolerate any local myths and tales of individual heroic fame and glory. Any personalistic expression of love for one's native home, to the common cultural heritage was rendered as inadmissible.

The first menacing signal was sent to the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad. In 1946, soon after its festive inauguration, the curator of the museum Lev Rakov and other research workers (those who during 1942-44 organized picture shows, collected memorable relics of the blockade and exposed them along with the German trophies) were reproached with the biased treatment of the special role of Leningrad during the war.¹⁷ Only in retrospect it becomes clear that during the time spanned from the day when Leningrad was completely liberated from the blockade (Jan. 27, 1944) to the publication of the Decree of the Central Committee about the journals *Zvezda* and

¹⁷ *Ленинградское дело* (Ленинград: Институт истории партии, 1990), 352. See also interview with Olga Markhaeva, senior research assistant at the now reopened National Museum of the Defense of Leningrad, in our *Writing the Siege of Leningrad*, 170-73, 352-359.

Leningrad (August 14, 1946) so many dangerous moves were made in order to play down the so called “myth” of special role of the city of Leningrad during the blockade.

The Central Committee’s attack of the Leningrad journals and Zhdanov’s assault of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova signaled the beginning of punitive actions whose targets were nonconformist authors; “cosmopolitan” artists, scholars and professionals (1947-50), and, beginning from 1949, the top figures in the City Party Organization, City Soviet, the Department of Culture (Leningrad Public Library) and the organizers of the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad (The Leningrad Affair). In 1949 investigators from the Central Committee of CP claimed that the organizers of the museum exhibitions had diminished Stalin’s role of a military leader, and, under the pretext of exhibiting trophy armaments, had amassed ammunition for a terrorist act and an attempt of the life of the leader.” The Museum was closed, its exhibitions destroyed, some of its holdings distributed among the city libraries and other museums, and the culture of the blockade was “disqualified” as a cultural phenomenon.

The question still remains, why did Stalin and, enflamed by his wrath, the Central Committee and Zhdanov agreed to tolerate *Zvezda* and to undo the *Leningrad*? - Partially, because of the journal’s “ill-fated” role in the history of Leningrad culture. In the end of 1939 the decision was made to change the entire editorial board of the old literary-political journal the *Cutter* (“Rezec”) and to reopen it under the name of *Leningrad*. A new editor of the journal, S. Gorsky, succeeded to attract to *Leningrad* the best artist, writers, literary and arts critics of the city: Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Erich Gollerbakh, Akhmatova, Druzin, Shefner and others. Supported by these contributors, the journal, an eponym of the great Lenin, turned the other profile to its historical creator,

Peter the Great. Already in January 1941 the journal's interest to historical culture was interpreted as a deviation from the general line, and an anonymous Editorial reminded the journal of its neglected duties:

Современный Ленинград знаменит и славен не “иглой”; не чудесной аркой Главного Штаба и не гранитами Невы. Не в них душа нашего современного города. .. Его прошлое ... завоевано железом и кровью. Та история, которую мы делали и делаем, связана с этим типичным старо-петербургским пейзажем только географически.¹⁸

One can agree with Leonid Dubshan, author of a belated obituary “In Memory of an Unknown Journal” that only the beginning of the War saved the *Leningrad* from further attacks. Speaking of the fate of the journal, one should not forget Stalin's mistrust and lack of sympathy to the city of Lenin that grew stronger after the war, when he chose Stalingrad as an embodiment of the myth of his Martial greatness. Authors who published their poems with *Leningrad* and *Zvezda* in 1942-44, mentioned with love and pride the invincible Bronze Horseman Statue whose hand pointed to the West, and to the same direction, the West, they wished, the Red Army, and soldiers of Leningrad Front were to chase the Nazi hordes. During the blockade, “Drang nach Westen” became a shibboleth of the anti-Nazi propaganda: one could find it as a motto in lampoons, war-time posters and wall papers in the city of Leningrad, and after the war, the name of the journal was inevitably rhymed with the name of the city whose cultural role in history was known as “Window to Europe” to the West.

¹⁸ Петербургский журнал; 1, 2: 1993,26.

During the session of the Organizational Bureau of CC VKPB on August 9, 1946, Stalin and Zhdanov first impeached *Leningrad* with nostalgia for the past, then Stalin stated that rather than the organ of the Soviet Press *Leningrad* was Zoshchenko's "organ" and that's why it is to be closed. When Tikhonov awkwardly uttered his plea to let the journal *Leningrad* stay as an embodiment of Soviet culture and a beach-head of our military valor" (если мы потеряем Ленинград, то это означает, что мы потеряли кусочек советской культуры, «пяточок» во фронтовом смысле, за который мы недостаточно стойко боролись», - Stalin got furious: - "Leningrad, he said, meaning the city, - will survive without a journal. There they write badly. Wrong people are writing. ... How can we tolerate on their posts people who allowed this (meaning Zoshchenko) to be published! Why should they fasten an old senile poetess to the journal! (зачем поэтессу-старуху приспособливать к журналу!) - yelled the Immortal leader who was ten years older than Akhmatova. - Those who do not want to be reformed, - like Zoshchenko - to hell with them."

During the 5 days between this session and the publication of the decision of the Central Committee concerning the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, the list of anathematized works published by *Leningrad* grew longer. Indicative, although both Zoshchenko and Akhmatova were Russian authors, all other contributors to the journal (Slonimsky, Khazin, Rest) mentioned in the text of the Decision, were Jewish. In many respects the retribution that hit *Zvezda*, *Leningrad*, and their contributors was used as a model for a far broader anti-cosmopolitan campaign whose onset was flagged by A. Fedeev's speech in the Institute of World Literature on 20 February 1947.

1. Вадим Шефнер, «Шиповник»

Здесь фундаментов камень в песок

перемолот войной,

.....

Ни домов, ни травы, ни заборов,

ни улицы нет,

.....

Но шиповника куст — не с того ль,

что он крови под цвет,—

Уцелел,— и цветет среди мусора,

щебня и праха.

Стисни зубы и молча пройди

по печальным местам,

Мсти за павших в бою, забывая и страх

и усталость.

А могил не ищи....

Предоставь это дело цветам,—

Всё видали они, и цвести им недолго

осталось.

Лепестки опадают....

Средь этих изрытых дорог
Раскидает, разметет их ветер беспечный
и шалый;
Но могилу героя отыщет любой лепесток,
Потому что и некуда больше здесь падать,
пожалуй.

2. Зеркало

Как бы ударом страшного тарана
Здесь половина дома снесена
И в облаках морозного тумана
Обугленная висится стена.
.....
И пусть я все забуду остальное —
Мне не забыть, как на ветру дрожа,
Висит над бездной зеркало стенное
На высоте шестого этажа.
Оно каким-то чудом не разбилось,
Убиты люди, стены сметены,—
Оно висит, судьбы слепая милость,
Над пропастью печали и войны.
Свидетель довоенного уюта,

На сыростью изъеденной стене
Тепло дыханья и улыбку чью-то
Оно хранит в стеклянной глубине

3. Н. Тихонов, “Киров с нами”

Под грохот полночных снарядов,
В полночный воздушный налет,
В железных ночах Ленинграда
По городу Киров идет
В шинели армейской походной
Как будто полков впереди,
Идет он тем шагом свободным,
Каким он в сраженьи ходил.

.....

Пусть красное пламя снаряда
Не раз полыхало в цехах,
Работай на совесть, как надо,
Гони и усталость и страх

.....

Пусть наши супы водяные,
Пусть хлеб на вес золота стал,
Мы будем стоять как стальные,

Потом мы успеем устать

.....

В железных ночах Ленинграда

По городу Киров идет,

И сердце прегордое радо,

Что так непреклонен народ

.....

И в ярости злой канонады

Немецкую гробить орду

В железных ночах Ленинграда

На бой лениградцы идут..

4. Ольга Берггольц, «Мы предчувствовали полыханье»

Мы предчувствовали полыханье

этого трагического дня.

Он пришел. Вот жизнь моя, дыханье.

Родина! Возьми их у меня!

Я и в этот день не позабыла

горьких лет гонения и зла,

но в слепящей вспышке поняла:

это не со мной — с тобою было. ...

.....

Нет, я ничего не позабыла!

Но была б мертва, осуждена,—
встала бы на зов твой из могилы.

Все б мы встали, а не я одна