

DISTRUST, ANIMOSITY, AND SOLIDARITY

Jews and Non-Jews during the Holocaust in the USSR

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in the USSR

Edited by Christoph Dieckmann and Arkadi Zeltser



THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR HOLOCAUST RESEARCH

The Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research
on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union

Distrust, Animosity, and Solidarity
Jews and Non-Jews during the Holocaust in the USSR

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Soviet Authorities and the Jewish Question in Besieged Leningrad, 1941–1942

NIKITA LOMAGIN

Literature, Sources, and Methodology

The siege of Leningrad was one of the turning points of World War II. The capture of Leningrad—the city of the tsars and the former capital of the Russian Empire, the cradle of the Bolshevik Revolution, and the hub of about one-third of Soviet military industrial wealth,¹ as well as a base for the Baltic Fleet that irritated the German navy throughout the war—was one of Hitler’s ultimate goals. As tragic as the siege was and despite the enormous suffering and loss of life, the city held out, thwarting Hitler’s goals. For the Soviet regime, the Leningrad siege might be considered “a moment of truth.” The German invasion of the USSR and the subsequent blockade of the city by German and Finnish troops, which caused hunger and massive civilian deaths, presented not only a military and mobilization challenge, but also a test of the political–ideological system and loyalties of the various groups among the population, including the substantial Jewish population in Leningrad.² The war was also a moment

1 Iosif Stalin, “Vystuplenie 17 apreliia 1940 g.,” in N. S. Tarkhova et al., eds., *“Zimniaia voina”: rabota nad oshibkami (aprel’–mai 1940 g.): Materialy komissii Glavnogo voennogo soveta Krasnoi Armii po obobshcheniiu opyta finskoi kampanii* (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Letnii Sad, 2004), p. 32.

2 For a detailed account on anti-Soviet activities and negative attitudes in Leningrad during the siege see Nikita Lomagin, *Politicheskii kontrol’ i negativnye nastroeniia leningradtsev v period Otechestvennoi voiny: Dissertatsiia*

of significant change in policies and practices as a result of the unprecedented threat to the very existence of the Soviet state.³ A final but no less significant dimension of this new war experience was the relationship of Stalinism to Russian nationalism and the relations between the various nationalities in the Soviet Union.

By 1941, it was estimated that the Soviet Union was home to 5.1–5.2 million Jews, including those in the territories annexed in 1939–1940, that is, around 30 percent of all Jews worldwide.⁴ Leningrad itself had a large Jewish population. In January 1939, there were about 201,500 Jews in the city of 3.2 million, comprising over 6 percent of the city's population⁵ and almost a quarter of the RSFSR's urban Jews.⁶ Leningrad had one of the largest proportions of Jews in any city in the RSFSR, and the number of Jews in Leningrad at that time almost equaled the total number of all the other ethnic minorities in the city.⁷ After the Bolshevik Revolution, Leningrad's Jews felt quite at home as a result of their successful acculturation and assimilation, especially in governance, the media, law, medicine, pedagogy, and the arts, well as a commerce.

na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni doktora istoricheskikh nauk (PhD diss., St. Petersburg State University, 2005); Nauchnaia biblioteka dissertatsii i avtoreferatov, disserCat, <http://www.dissercat.com> (accessed November 10, 2020).

- 3 Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin, eds., *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), p. x.
- 4 Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), p. 9; Mark Tolts, "Populations since World War I," in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vol. 2 (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 1,429.
- 5 Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt-Peterburga (TSGAIPD SPb), f. 25, op. 8, d. 76, l. 15; see also Mikhael Beizer, "The Jewish Minority in Leningrad, 1917–1939" (paper presented at the BASEEES Conference, Cambridge, England, March 1995), pp. 8–10.
- 6 Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust*, pp. 34, 220.
- 7 Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 83.

There are some authors who argue that Stalin's overall record on antisemitism was terrible.⁸ Amir Weiner believed that Stalin began his antisemitic campaign long before World War II. He cited Svetlana Allilueva, Stalin's daughter, who noted that already "with the expulsion of Trotsky and the extermination during the years of purges of old party members, many of whom were Jews, antisemitism was reborn on new ground and, first of all, within the party itself."⁹ Regarding antisemitism in Leningrad on the eve of war, according to St. Petersburg historian Vladlen Izmozik, who based his research on censorship materials, the "Jewish question" remained an important pillar in building a socio-political mindset in Soviet Russia, especially among city dwellers.¹⁰ For them, antisemitism was an ethnic, or national, as well as a social phenomenon.

In the eyes of these people, a "Jew" represented, first and foremost, a certain dominant social stratum in governance, retail, and other "hot" and prestigious areas. That is why the notion of "Jews" was often associated with superiors, officials, e.g., those "villains" who pervert the will of a "good ruler" and even ruin him. "Jews," therefore, acquired an image of an enemy who was guilty of all misfortunes and who was ideal for black-and-white thinking.¹¹

8 For a detailed account of the historiography of this subject, see Karel C. Berkhoff, "'Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population': The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941–45," in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin, eds., *The Holocaust in the East. Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), pp. 83–117.

9 Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 235. Gennady Kostyrchenko holds a similar opinion. He believes that the first signs of state-sponsored antisemitism became evident before 1941; see Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: Vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2001), pp. 177–221.

10 Vladlen Izmozik, "V 'zerkale' politkontrolia: Politicheskii kontrol' i rossiiskaia povsednevnost' v 1918–1928 godakh," *Nestor*, 1 (2001), p. 256.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

Sarah Davies has documented many cases of such statements recorded by various Communist Party institutions. Data on rumors, various leaflets, personal correspondence, etc., mentioned in reports on public morale and political attitudes allowed her to conclude that there was a strong undercurrent of antisemitism in popular opinion during the 1920s and 1930s in Leningrad, which was the “most common form of expression of ethnic hostility.”

Antisemitism, which had notoriously deep roots in Imperial Russian history, developed during the early Soviet decades in part because Jews were constantly among and identified with a ruling elite, which included Communist Party members, state servants, and the intelligentsia, while “few Jews worked in factories, and even fewer in agriculture.” In the mindset of Leningrad’s masses of factory workers and relocated peasants, criticism of those in power could lead rather easily to expressions of virulent hatred of Jews.¹²

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the issue of antisemitism had two dimensions. While the first dealt with the national question in the Red Army, the second focused on the situation in the Soviet territories that were not occupied by the Nazis. The war was a powerful catalyst for many latent developments, including the national issue. According to the mobilization plan, within literally a few weeks in Leningrad—as well as in many other industrial cities near the approaching front—a significant part of the male population was drafted into the army, while the other part had to be evacuated to the east, along with the factories and various institutions, to build arms far out of the reach of the German air force. In the context of our topic, the key political question was: Who volunteered for the army to meet the approaching Nazi troops, and who stayed in Leningrad, or was to be evacuated?

Since the whole issue of mobilization planning was top secret and only a few officials in Smolny, the Leningrad Communist Party headquarters, knew the protocol of the actions undertaken during the war, it was not surprising that the entire process of draft and evacuation became a subject of speculation among the

12 Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, pp. 83–85.

Leningrad population. The mass media, especially newspapers such as *Leningradskaia pravda*, were caught off guard and did not even attempt to explain the ongoing developments regarding the redistribution of men and labor according to the new situation of war.

In addition, one has to keep in mind two significant factors that fueled antisemitic feelings among the defenders of Leningrad and its civilian population. The first was massive anti-Soviet and antisemitic German propaganda. Nazi leaflets were dropped on Leningrad in mid-July 1941 and, later, the German air force disseminated millions of copies of antisemitic texts. The second was official Soviet propaganda regarding Russian nationalism, which prevailed over traditional internationalism by the end of August 1941. This type of propaganda campaign invoked in the army and in the public the question of the national identity of the members of the Soviet ruling elite. Who are those people who run the country? Are they indeed Russians? In other words, the war created an absolutely new situation with regard to the national question.

This is why Oleg Budnitskii has reason to believe that, during the war, the Soviet regime did not fight antisemitism in the Red Army, because by doing so it would have confirmed one of the main ideas of Nazi propaganda—that “Soviet power” was “Jewish power.” Budnitskii believes that, given the widespread antisemitism, the Soviet regime could hardly afford this, even if it wanted to do so.¹³ Some recent publications, including an account by Vladimir Gel’fand, also suggest that antisemitism was on the rise in the USSR during the war.¹⁴ Similar views were expressed by prominent filmmaker Mikhail Romm in his letter to Stalin on

13 Oleg Budnitskii, “‘Dnevnik, priiaatel’ dorogoi!’ Voennyi dnevnik Vladimira Gel’fanda,” in Vladimir Gelfand, *Dnevnik 1941–1946* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2016), p. 19; Budnitskii, “Jews at War: Diaries from Front,” in Harriet Murav and Gennady Estrakh, eds., *Soviet Jews in World War II: Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), pp. 76–79; Budnitskii, “The Great Patriotic War and Soviet Society: Defeatism, 1941–42,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasia History*, 15:4 (2014), pp. 782–783.

14 Gel’fand, *Dnevnik 1941–1946*, pp. 18–19.

January 8, 1943.¹⁵ Arkadi Zeltser argues that “anti-Jewish attitudes in the Soviet rear and, to some extent, on the front as well, was one factor that led to the reinforcement of Soviet Jewish identity.”¹⁶ However, Zvi Gitelman reached a different conclusion on the basis of interviews with Jewish veterans, who refused to accept that antisemitism in the Red Army was widespread.¹⁷

So what about Leningrad? Does the Leningrad case prove the aforementioned trend of growing antisemitism during the war, or was the whole problem more complicated? What was the issue regarding ordinary Leningraders and representatives of Soviet authorities at various institutions and at different levels? This paper seeks to examine the problem of hostile beliefs toward the Jews by examining various documents: SPO—*sekretno-politicheskii otdel* (the Soviet secret police’s secret Political Department) and Communist Party reports, Leningrad newspapers, diaries of Leningrad residents, as well as German intelligence reports, which provide glimpses of popular opinion under Stalin. It draws on previous research on the Soviet political control apparatus and its fight against German propaganda during the battle for Leningrad, which includes public morale and the political attitudes of Leningraders, as well as the state attempts to neutralize Nazi propaganda.¹⁸ This approach, admittedly partially anecdotal, holds the most promise for such research-oriented discussions, since there are few additional sources available that detail public attitudes on the matter during the late 1930s and World War II.¹⁹

15 Alexander Yakovlev, ed., *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b)–VChK–OGPU–NKVD o kul'turnoi politike 1917–1953* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond Demokratia, 1999), p. 484.

16 Arkadi Zeltser, “Jewish Response to the Non-Jewish Question: ‘Where Were the Jews during the Fighting?’ 1941–5,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, 46:1 (2016), p. 4.

17 Zvi Y. Gitelman, “Internationalism, Patriotism, and Disillusion,” in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Symposium Presentations* (Washington: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2005), pp. 111–113.

18 Nikita Lomagin, *Neizvestnaia blokada*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Neva, 2002), pp. 190–216.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 390.

One scholar has pointed out that “the plural of anecdotes is not data.”²⁰ However, David Brandenberger is correct in saying that such high standards for discussion of the mid-twentieth century *mentalité* anywhere in the world is absolutely unrealistic, since systematic research on public opinion is a postwar invention by Western scholars.²¹ Thus, we can reject both extremes—no antisemitism in Leningrad and Leningrad replete with antisemitism. But how much was there? It is hard to tell, because there was no good, social science research at the time. Instead, what we have are different assessments—how the assessments were made depended on their institutional position. The story of antisemitism during the siege is not only a story of real antisemitic dispositions, the scale and scope of which we cannot know for certain, although we may infer some of its parameters. This story of antisemitism is also one of how the different authorities framed it, defined it, sought it, and extrapolated its existence and scope from signs that they perceived, or failed to perceive, and interpreted in different ways. So this becomes an institutional story, rather than a story of the degree of antisemitism, which is difficult to assess from the data in any case.

What is rather astonishing for a highly centralized political system in the Soviet Union is that the Communist Party and the NKVD (Soviet secret police) viewed interethnic relations and fighting xenophobia, including antisemitism, quite differently. Moreover, one has to keep in mind that different departments in the Communist Party apparatus were not equally preoccupied with fighting antisemitism. While propaganda and agitation organs had to wage a massive counterpropaganda campaign from the first days of the war, and information units had to register the entire spectrum of political attitudes both at military works and civilian institutions, other Communist Party departments

20 Robert E. Johnson, “Review of *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*, by Sheila Fitzpatrick” in *Slavic Review*, 55:1 (1996), p. 187.

21 David Brandenburger, “Soviet Social Mentalité and Russicentrism on the Eve of War, 1936–1941,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas: Neue Folge*, 48:3 (2000), p. 389.

were preoccupied with various tasks that had nothing to do with fighting xenophobia and antisemitic sentiments. They were dealing with mobilization, conscription for the army and the *Narodnoe opolchenie* (people's militia),²² military production, and the evacuation of military works and civilian institutions. In other words, their take on antisemitism was different and fell under the bureaucratic model of behavior: where you stand depends on where you sit.

If Leningrad's NKVD acted by and large according to directives from its central apparatus, the Leningrad Communist Party enjoyed greater freedom in defining key threats, both potential and real, to the stability of the home front. It had at its disposal a massive propaganda apparatus, including the press and radio, and was rather flexible in waging its activities. The largest local newspaper, *Leningradskaia pravda*, and the Leningrad Radio Committee were directly under the authority of Smolny and the appropriate departments of propaganda and agitation. Also, the Leningrad Communist Party gathered political information through its network of cells and special information units at all levels. To some extent, this may explain certain deviations in assessing "negative" attitudes by the organs of the party and the NKVD. Thereafter, the Leningrad Communist Party began fighting antisemitism immediately after the German invasion of the USSR as part of its campaign against Nazi ideology, and it was able to diagnose the growth of grassroots antisemitism before the Leningrad NKVD did. The latter viewed this threat as rather marginal in comparison with espionage, sabotage, and wrecking. Later on, law enforcement institutions, such as the NKVD, the VP—*voennaia prokuratura* (military procuracy)—and the VT—*voennye tribunaly* (military tribunals)—came to view antisemitic sentiments as strong evidence of pro-Nazi inclinations.

All in all, the Leningrad Party reports on political attitudes in factories and institutions, as well as the summaries prepared

22 The people's militia was composed of volunteer civilian defenders of the city who were minimally trained to fight on Leningrad's front lines and to guard strategic sites, such as factories.

by the district and city officials, or speeches by some prominent Leningrad leaders—especially Andrei Zhdanov, head of the Leningrad Communist Party and one of the closest of Stalin’s associates, and Alexei Kuznetsov, the second secretary of the Leningrad Party—provide more nuanced information regarding the fears at Smolny, including the fear of potential outbursts of antisemitism. They shed light not only on **what** people said or did, but also, in some cases, on **why** people said or did something. *Leningradskaia pravda* mirrored the general concerns of the city leadership and did its best to neutralize negative facts in Leningrad.

Ego-documents are more manifold and could reflect personal views regarding public attitudes and behavior. As far as face-to-face interviews with siege survivors are concerned, few shed light on the problem. More interesting are diaries and memoirs, most of which became available only after 1991. By now, there are about 200 non-censored diaries of Leningraders available in various archives and libraries in St. Petersburg. Some shed light on the personal attitudes of city dwellers toward representatives of other nationalities. However, it is worth mentioning that very few of them contain information relevant to our study. It seems that for the vast majority of those who kept a diary during the siege, or who were interviewed later, the relations between people of different nationalities were insignificant. Few commented on national issues, or expressed negative attitudes toward the Jews. In fact, only two people—the aging artists Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Liubov’ Shaporina²³—provided clear, negative stereotypes about Jews, revealing the problem. Neither accepted the October Revolution, and both blamed the Jews for the collapse of the old regime. It seems that Alexis Peri, Cynthia Simmons, and Nina Perlina, who focused mainly on survival strategies, did not find the

23 On Shaporina’s antisemitic comments in her diary, see Liubov’ Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017); the first edition was published in 2012. See also Mikhail Edel’shtein’s review “Atisemitizm i geroizm,” February 29, 2012, <http://booknik.ru/today/non-fiction/antisemitizm-i-geroizm/> (accessed November 10, 2020).

antisemitic comments by Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Shaporina as important for their scholarly accounts.²⁴

When the War Began—Controversy over Soviet Propaganda

When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, the Jews in Leningrad played a significant role in the city government. While ethnic Russians dominated the Leningrad Communist Party and the state apparatus at all levels, the Jews in Leningrad worked in propaganda and information units of the *gorkom* (Leningrad City Committee of the Communist Party) and the *raikoms* (Communist Party district committees). There were sixteen districts in Leningrad, and the propaganda and information departments of the *raikoms* had employees of Jewish origin. Jews also held positions on the editorial boards of *Leningradskaia pravda* and Leningrad Radio, as well as on the editorial board of the Leningrad branch of the main news agency, TASS. Employees of Jewish origin contributed much to the work of judiciary and law enforcement institutions, such as the Leningrad VP²⁵ and the VT. As for the mighty NKVD, there were 40 officers of Jewish origin in the Leningrad Administration

24 Alexis Peri did not mention antisemitism in besieged Leningrad in her Pushkin House Prize winning book; see Alexis Peri, *The War Within: Diaries from the Siege of Leningrad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017). The same may be said about Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina, *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002). For a brief analysis that addresses antisemitism as part of how Leningraders constructed communities of suffering, especially who was included or excluded in that community, see Jeffrey Hass, *Wartime Suffering and Survival: The Human Condition under Siege in the Blockade of Leningrad, 1941–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), chap. 7. Hass pointed out that there is an issue of class and diaries. We expect antisemitism more in diaries of the intelligentsia because they wrote more; they tended to do so because they had the skills and drive, and they had more developed worldviews. Therefore, they provided more data and could more easily articulate antisemitism. They were not inherently more antisemitic than workers; we would just expect to find more of their writings.

25 In 1942, in the Leningrad Military Procuracy alone, 5 out of 17 prosecutors were Jews; see TsGAIPD SPb, *f.* 24, *op.* 2b, *d.* 5890. *l.* 47–49.

of the NKVD at the end of 1942. This cohort was the second largest, after the predominantly Russian group of 1,100 people.²⁶

A substantially bigger percentage of Jews served in the political administration of the Leningrad front. In particular, their skills were needed in the 7th Department that waged propaganda warfare directed against the German army and different units of German satellites near Leningrad.²⁷ In other words, there was a significant number of Soviet officials of Jewish origin in the Communist Party's propaganda and law enforcement institutions in Leningrad who were eager to apply criminal law, or simply identify those who spread antisemitic sentiments. Of course, fighting antisemitism ideologically went well beyond this group.

According to a special decision by the Leningrad Communist Party from June 24, 1941, all anti-Nazi literature shelved after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, as well as anti-fascist movies and records, were being used by various propaganda institutions.²⁸ Films, such as *Professor Mamlock* (1938), *The Oppenheim Family* (1939), and *Karl Brunner* (1936), gave Leningraders a clear picture of the Nazi regime. *Leningradskaia pravda* devoted a special article that not only described the main ideas of those films, but also reflected the reactions of those who watched them. For instance, *Professor Mamlock*, directed by Herbert Rappaport

26 Other cohorts represented Ukrainians (31 men) and Belarusians (24 men); see A. R. Dzeniskevich, ed., *Leningrad v osade: Sbornik dokumentov o geroicheskoi oborone Leningada v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1914–1944* (St. Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 1995), p. 448.

27 Nikita Lomagin, *Leningrad v blokade* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2004). According to professor of philology Vladimir Admoni, he closely cooperated with the 7th Department, contributing numerous propaganda materials, such as leaflets, illustrated magazines, and newspapers. He was denied a position in this unit because his brother, Johann, had been arrested by NKVD on July 10, 1941 and was deported from Leningrad as “a German,” although both brothers were Jewish. All three attempts to obtain an official position in the 7th Department at the initiative of its head, Vasiliu Isakov, failed. “They stole my war,” Admoni later wrote in his memoirs. Meanwhile, Admoni was doing his best to prepare to fight in the streets in case the Germans would enter the city. See Tamara Sil'man and Vladimir Grigor'evich Admoni, *My vspominaem: Roman* (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 1993), pp. 246–247.

28 TsGAIPI SPb, f. 25, op. 10, d. 237, l. 4–6.

and Adolf Minkin, was one of the earliest works dealing with Nazi antisemitism. The film portrayed the hardships that Hans Mamlock, a Jewish doctor, experienced under Hitler's regime.²⁹ *The Oppenheim Family* was a drama film, directed by Grigorii Roshal', that also dealt directly with the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany.

During the first two months of the war, Soviet anti-Nazi propaganda efforts significantly intensified. Leningrad artists produced about 250 types of posters and postcards to mobilize people.³⁰ Leningrad writers set up a special bureau, the *biuro oboronnoi pechati* (defense print bureau), under the Leningrad section of the Union of Writers, which approved about 300 anti-fascist short stories and novels. In mid-July, 1941, Comedy Theater began producing the "Anti-Fascist Review" by famous writers Mikhail Zoshchenko and Evgenii Shvarts.³¹ Well-known scientists also contributed to unmasking Nazi ideology. Biology professor Anton Nemilov contributed to the critical analysis of the "racial theory" that was a key pillar of Nazism.³² The propaganda apparatus at all levels delivered hundreds of lectures on fascism and its ideology at plants and research institutes, mobilization points, universities, and households.³³

Although propaganda against antisemitism was not a dominant part of the Soviet propaganda activity after the Nazi invasion, it constituted an important and well-organized component of the overall war effort. On June 25, 1941, Vasilii Struve, a full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and an Orientalist, made a commitment to write an article about Nazi antisemitism and kept his word.³⁴ Moreover, the Leningrad press made clear from the very beginning that antisemitic hate

29 *Leningradskaiia pravda*, June 27, 1941. For more about the films *Professor Mamlock* and *The Oppenheim Family*, see Olga Gershenzon, *Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2013), pp. 13–28.

30 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 408, op. 2, d. 51, l. 103.

31 *Leningradskaiia pravda*, July 19, 1941.

32 *Ibid.*, July 2, 1941.

33 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 408, op. 2, d. 51, l. 154.

34 *Ibid.*, f. 4, op. 3, d. 356, l. 56.

speech was a crime. Thus, it would be wrong to say that fighting antisemitism in Leningrad did not exist, or was a marginal activity, before the siege.

Another and related question is whether or not those efforts produced any positive, lasting results, such as neutralizing German antisemitic propaganda. Or alternatively, did they represent little more than the usual bureaucratic activity of the Soviet propaganda state? Despite all these efforts, this campaign to show the essence of Nazi ideology and its antisemitic dimension was overshadowed by the more intensive and widespread propaganda to promote Russian patriotism and nationalism that had a potentially risky side effect. By invoking Russian heroes of the past³⁵ who had saved the Fatherland against a number of foreign invaders, Soviet propaganda further fueled Russian nationalism that could not only undermine the Bolshevik mantra of proletarian internationalism but could also fuel intolerance toward other nationalities, including Jews.

This new wave of Soviet propaganda stimulated the search for a new identity and, quite often, it resulted in critical judgments among some Leningraders about the nature of the Soviet state that “due to the Bolsheviks, ceased to exist as a Russian national state.”³⁶ A new way of reading Russian history prompted a whole spectrum of deliberations regarding the national question. Some people advanced the idea of discrimination against Russians, as if non-Russians, first of all Jews, enjoyed a predominant position in the government. Some people went even further by attacking

35 The most frequently mentioned names were Nevsky, Donskoy, Minin, Pozharsky, Suvorov, and Kutuzov.

36 The Leningrad NKVD reported a typical statement by an associate professor from Leningrad State University: “It’s fearful—Russia has ceased to exist as a national state. The Soviets [Soviet state] is neither a state nor Russia. Internationalism is nonsense that ruined Russia. The Russians reveled in the illusion that they were the masters in the state. They do not see reality—for example, that the Jews and other nationalities occupy all key positions in the government. The worst thing is that the economic foundation of the state has been undermined. There are no longer any Russian muzhiks—they were the backbone of the Russian state throughout all its history.” See *Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 377–378.*

several top officials, including Stalin himself, and his inner circle. Stalin's non-Russian origin unquestionably touched a raw nerve among some common people. Thus, the emphasis that Soviet propaganda placed on Russian patriotism may have stimulated antisemitism by implicitly placing Jews outside the bounds of "Russianness." The idea that Jews were non-Russians who had come to dominate Russians through Communism was reportedly recorded by the SPO.

First Public Reaction to the Crisis

Unaware of the Nazi atrocities on Soviet soil, Leningraders initially reacted to the announcement of the German invasion much as they had reacted to the war with Finland on November 30, 1939—*sberegatel'nye kassy* (by hurrying to banks) to withdraw their savings and then queuing at shops to purchase all kinds of food and consumer goods. A prominent reaction to the first days of the Soviet-German war was a sharp rise in patriotism, even among those considered potential members of the "fifth column" who were under the control of the NKVD. However, already by mid-July 1941, public attitudes in Leningrad changed dramatically. Military setbacks and the loss of an enormous amount of territory to the German army had a sobering effect. The initial, overwhelming patriotism and the deep-rooted belief that the enemy would be defeated on its own soil within a few months, as prewar Soviet propaganda insisted, had evaporated and accentuated a whole spectrum of politically heterogeneous feelings and emotions. The most critical period of defense was mid-September 1941, when demolition experts under NKVD supervision mined the warships of the Baltic Sea Fleet, many plants, and other key installations in the city's southern districts with the intention of destroying them, should the city be taken.

Even in the first weeks of the war, some rare anti-Soviet remarks were mixed with antisemitic comments. They appeared to be new incarnations of old anti-Jewish prejudices, such as the

claim that it was not Russian minds that governed the country, but Jewish ones, and, therefore, the Jews caused all the misfortunes. A report from the Dzerzhinskii district on July 8, 1941, documented antisemitic sentiment. A certain P. A. Raevskaia was overheard saying, "Well, when Hitler arrives, the Jews will get theirs... Russian fools all the time are called upon to work, while the Jews shirk work."³⁷ Party and NKVD informants detected a sharp rise in antisemitic speech from July to mid-September 1941. The SPO observed a marked increase in the number of leaflets that called for pogroms against Jews. The Jews were sometimes castigated as a privileged and cowardly elite, and every step taken by the authorities, including food rations and commodities regulations could entail anti-Jewish comments.

A *raikom* report, dated August 29, 1941, states that antisemitic remarks and conversations had been heard at the Kirov factory and at least five other factories in the district, in queues, on public transport, and especially in communal housing.³⁸ Informant reports reveal that many in the city believed that Leningrad would fall and that, if that were to occur, party and security personnel, as well as the city's large Jewish population, would be eliminated. Opinions were divided over what would happen to the remaining inhabitants. Some Leningraders were not alarmed at the prospect of German occupation, and a small minority boldly voiced their hope that the city would fall. Antisemitic outbursts, such as "Beat the Yids," which were heard on occasion, were generally prosecuted as counterrevolutionary crimes.

Antisemitic attitudes were not restricted to factories and the working class. Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva was an artist, printmaker, and book illustrator, who continued her practice of maintaining her diary on almost a daily basis, even in the darkest days of the siege. Despite her own warm relations with various Jewish intellectuals as individuals, her contempt for the city's "Jews" as a more abstract collectivity surfaced repeatedly.

37 Richard Bidlack and Nikita Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 332.

38 TsGAIPI SPb, f. 417, op. 3, d. 34, l. 2–3.

She expressed the utmost antisemitic observation, “Panic is widespread in Leningrad. All are fleeing from the city...Everything is being done with unusual skill and quickness. All of them are Jews.”³⁹ Ostroumova-Lebedeva described public attitudes in the city in July–August as “extremely tense”—at a time when most people were hysterical—adding that some people expressed sharp antisemitic views.⁴⁰ In her entry on July 6, 1941, she described a visit to the Russian Museum.

In the Drawing and Watercolor Department, the professional staff was filled with indignation at the behavior of the Jews working at the museum. When there was an appeal at a meeting for volunteers to enlist in the Red Army and engage in other public works, they spoke very fervently and patriotically, but in practice they all managed to find “hot” and safe places for themselves, all of them without exception. Some of them even took advantage of staff reductions to secure better positions for themselves than they had had before. In a word, my friends said that all of this was insultingly vile and mean.⁴¹

Two days later, she wrote,

In the evening, Ol’ga Anatol’evna visited. She is surrounded by panic-stricken coworkers, because they’re all Jews. In that institution, there is a 5 percent quota for Russian workers. Everyone is running around looking for a way to leave. And all this is done on the sly with exceptional cunning and pushiness.⁴²

39 Russian National Library, *f.* 1015, *d.* 57, *l.* 20.

40 *Ibid.*, *l.* 22. Ostroumova-Lebedeva noted that the Jews “being cowards by nature, do their best to escape conscription. And if they fail to do so, they go to various offices, wagon trains, etc. They also avoid labor duty and do not want to dig trenches. When everyone is busy [working], they enjoy vacations.”

41 Russian National Library, *f.* 1015, *d.* 57, *l.* 20.

42 *Ibid.*

Her entry on August 2, 1941, includes the statement, “They evacuate especially hastily those institutions that are headed up by Jews.”⁴³

On August 31, 1941, artist Lubov’ Shaporina wrote, “They say that Germans are a bit better than Georgians and Yids.”⁴⁴ This entry might reflect some of the expectations of the masses rather than her beliefs. Later, on October 16, she expressed her opinions at length.

It is shameful for everything. It is shameful for radio broadcasting. It is shameful for Lozovskii [deputy head of the Soviet Information Bureau]. Jewish parvenus, in general, are tactless, as are all parvenus, but Jews do not feel that Russia is their motherland. Dreadful. It seems I will neither be able to look into the eyes of any German, nor of any of our emigrants.⁴⁵

It seems that she felt contempt for the Germans who had tolerated Lozovskii and people like him for so many years, until Hitler arrived as their savior. Only in December 1941, after six months of war, of seemingly endless bombardments and indiscriminate shelling that resulted in numerous deaths and injuries to civilians, including children, she wrote, “I am disappointed with the German mind and Hitler’s strategy. It [such an approach] can destroy both the city and people, but as long as the [Red] Army keeps fighting, the city will not surrender. Why destroy it?”⁴⁶

Whatever the level of antisemitism in the city, it appears to have increased in the first weeks of the war and to have peaked in September, when Leningrad’s defense was most uncertain. German propaganda leaflets that were dropped from airplanes over the city included crude and vicious antisemitic themes, and they likely helped stir up sentiment against the Jews in

43 Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1944*, pp. 338–340.

44 Shaporina, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, pp. 351–352.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 387–388.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

Leningrad.⁴⁷ In conditions of growing military crises and the unsuccessful evacuation of civilians, especially children, residents of Leningrad acted according to one of three main strategies.

The first was that of a group that represented a majority of Leningraders who actively chose to participate in the defense of the city. This group of people, Jews and non-Jews alike, enlisted in the army, joined the people's militia, or did their best to produce munitions in numerous factories. Their family members decided to stay in Leningrad to defend the city by every possible means—for example, by digging trenches on the outskirts of Leningrad, or building other fortifications—to demonstrate their solidarity with and full support for their beloved ones who were fighting on the Leningrad front. This attitude was well expressed by Vladimir Admoni, who said, “At that time, the only problem for me was not to surrender Leningrad without fighting....I feared for the fate of my mother and myself less than that the Germans would not pay with dozens of thousands of their lives for taking Leningrad, which would be a shame.”⁴⁸

The second was that of a group that, quite to the contrary, was willing to leave the city as soon as possible. Like the representatives of the first group, the representatives of this group could also believe no less fervently in victory. Their wish was facilitated by the Soviet policy of evacuating the more important factories and institutions to the Soviet interior, and thousands of workers left the city in this way, not all voluntarily. As in all other locations in the country, there were many people looking for any opportunity to evacuate. Due to the Wehrmacht's unexpectedly rapid advance, or because their factory bosses did not give them permission to leave, many people in this group, both Jews and non-Jews, had to remain in Leningrad. Not surprisingly, many Jews who knew about Nazi antisemitism made up a significant part of those who tried to escape to the Soviet interior out of fear that the city could be taken, leaving them to a grizzly fate. For instance, Lilia Loshak,

47 Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1944*, pp. 56–57.

48 Sil'man and Admoni, *My vspominaem*, p. 245.

who graduated from the Chemical Technological College in Kharkov on the eve of the war,⁴⁹ had to go to Leningrad to work at Krasnoznamennets, one of the biggest munitions plants. She arrived in Leningrad on July 4, 1941. When the evacuation began, she also was willing to leave, but Ivan Nikolaev, the director of the plant, refused to allow her to evacuate because “it was not the proper time to leave.”⁵⁰

The third strategy was that of a group that consisted mainly of fatalists who decided to remain in the city for various reasons—in particular, they did not believe the Soviet propaganda about the Germans, and did not want to risk losing their property, which could be plundered, and to risk being deprived of their right to housing, i.e., to register to live in the city, which would be indicated in their inner passports, or they were simply afraid of the difficulties of evacuation.

There is no way to measure whether the Jews of Leningrad had a greater desire to leave the city and evacuated in proportionally greater numbers than the non-Jews. We may presume that the social positions of people significantly influenced their chances of being evacuated, or of escaping on their own. Jews were significantly represented in higher status positions and among skilled workers, and thus had greater chances of being evacuated to the east. Also, the uncertain situation on the front and German antisemitic propaganda probably strongly influenced some of Leningrad’s Jews. Communist Party informants reported that the German leaflets dropped on Leningrad threw some Jews into a panic.⁵¹ As for the

49 Gosudarstvennyi memorial’nyi muzei oborony i blokady Leningrada (GMMOBL), Rukopisno-dokumental’nyi fond, *d.* 29, *op.* 1: Vospominaniia veteranov voiny i truda gosudarstvennogo nauchno-proizvodstvennogo predpriiatiia “Krasnoznamennets,” *l.* 34–38.

50 *Ibid.* Feeling ill at ease about her wish to escape the city, Loshak wrote in her memoirs that she was thankful to the director, who did not inform anyone about her intentions. She returned to her work and nobody criticized her for cowardice. In February 1942, Loshak lost her ration cards but, as she recalled later, “people helped.”

51 In the beginning of war, the Soviet Jews, in general, were not aware of the barbaric plans of Nazi. According to a commander of the SD special task

rest of the Jewish population, what we know from some diaries was that the wish to leave Leningrad was rational, as in the case of unhealthy women who left the city, while most men remained to defend it. Indeed, the Jews of Leningrad had a powerful incentive to try to protect the city at all costs.

Naturally, some Leningrad residents reacted negatively to the perception that a significant number of Jews were among those leaving. In this respect, Leningraders did not differ from Muscovites and residents of other cities.⁵² A certain Iakov Vlasov transformed his general discontent with the evacuation of children early in the war into anti-Jewish sentiment. “Where can they go? There’s nowhere to go. The Jews can go. They give them separate rail cars, but Russians have to sit wherever they can find a seat and go wherever. The Jews have been beaten, but only a little. They should be beaten more.”⁵³ In July 1941, a port worker was heard expressing similar comments about the evacuation of the Jews. “Nowhere do the Jews live as well as in Russia, therefore they ought to be more willing to defend the homeland than others, but instead they use every means to leave Leningrad.” These attitudes coexisted with other popular anti-Jewish statements. Some workers gloated about the conscription of Jews who “occupied” the “cushy jobs” of storekeepers or norm-setters.⁵⁴

units operating in Belarus, “It is striking that the Jews are ill-informed about our policy.” See Khainz Hene, *Chernyi orden SS. Istoriia okhrannykh otriadov* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2003), p. 319. Indeed, following the non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany, the Soviet press changed its tone and did not pay attention to the antisemitic policy of the Nazis. With time, rumors about the massive crimes against the Jews circulated widely throughout the major cities in the USSR, causing fear especially in those regions that could be taken by the Wehrmacht.

52 See, for example, Mikhail M. Gorinov, “Muscovites’ Moods, 22 June 1941 to May 1942,” in Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetsch, eds., *The People’s War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 108–134.

53 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 408, op.2, d. 377, l. 86.

54 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4, op. 3, d. 352, l. 4.

German Propaganda and the Jewish Question

German anti-Jewish propaganda fell on this soil of uncertainty and intensified these sentiments significantly. Its primary goal was to spread the idea that “the main foes of Germany were not the peoples of the Soviet Union but only the Jewish–Bolshevik Soviet government and all its apparatus, including the Communist Party whose goal was world revolution.” Moreover, “German military forces came to the country not as enemies but as liberators from Soviet tyranny.”⁵⁵

The most important and massive instrument of psychological warfare was the dissemination of leaflets. According to German historian K. Kirchner, propaganda units of the Wehrmacht disseminated eighteen types of leaflets in Leningrad in 1941. In general, within the first six months of the war, the German air force dropped about a 100 million copies of various propaganda materials.⁵⁶

In general, German propaganda focused on three main topics: anti-Communism, a massive critique of the Soviet experiment, and antisemitism. The Nazis did their best to make the Soviet people believe that the Jews were guilty of all conceivable “sins,” and that many great minds of the past were antisemites—including Voltaire, Napoleon, Goethe, and Hugo. German propaganda cited famous Russian writers, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky,⁵⁷ Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Bunin, Vladimir Korolenko, Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Gumilev, Leonid Andreev, Yuri Lermontov, Afanasy Fet, Fyodor Tiutchev, and others to make their own views more popular among the populace. The Nazis published excerpts from their works that opposed revolutions and violence, criticized Russia for its backwardness, or emphasized self-denial and sacrifice as

55 Klaus Kirchner, *Flugblatt-Propaganda im 2. Weltkrieg. Flugblätter aus Deutschland 1941* (Flugblatt-Propaganda im 2. Weltkrieg Europa, Band 10) (Erlangen: Verlag D+C, 1987).

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 74, 76, 92, 110, 118, 124, 138, 179, 186, 189, 195, 199, 220, 221, 230, 236, 240, 245.

57 On Dostoyevsky’s opinion on Jews, see Tania Leshinsky, “Dostoyevski—Revolutionary or Reactionary?” *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 4:3/4 (December 1945), pp. 98–106.

key virtues of mankind. Dostoyevsky was quoted for his belief in the Russian people as a God-fearing people, but the author of *Crime and Punishment* and *The Demons* was also presented by the Germans as a proponent of antisemitism, the greatest enemy of Socialism, and the prophet of the antihuman nature of Soviet power. The emergence and development of Marxism in Russia, as well as the triumph of the Bolsheviks, were presented as “the Jews’ wish for world dominance.”⁵⁸

Since August 1941, German propaganda shifted its attention to local issues, such as the “exploitation” of the working class in Leningrad, “senseless” public works aimed at building the defense infrastructure in and around the city, and so on. The dominant theme in German leaflets was to “open” the city as a shortcut to end the war. The Nazis argued that the French government had saved Paris and managed to safeguard its cultural treasures by declaring the French capital an “open city.” They disseminated photos of peaceful and safe Paris and of destroyed Warsaw to make Leningraders see the difference and to act accordingly. On the eve of the siege in September 1941, the Germans called on both the Soviet soldiers and civilians in Leningrad “to actively take part in fighting against the commissars and the Yids” in order to bring “peace to the exhausted motherland.”⁵⁹

Tens of millions of copies of one of the most odious antisemitic leaflets were disseminated in mid-September 1941. It again called for killing “the Yid–commissars” and ending resistance.⁶⁰ At the end of September, 3 million copies of yet another leaflet were dropped on Leningrad. It summoned commanders, soldiers, civilians, and the women of Leningrad to “turn their bayonets against their oppressors,” “not to allow the destruction of factories, houses, and bridges,” “to detain commissars, executors of the NKVD, and Jewish agitators,” and “to help the victorious German army throw off the yoke.” However, the centerpiece of the leaflet was antisemitism.

58 Lomagin, *Neizvestnaja blokada*, vol.1, p. 192.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 195–196.

60 TsGAIPI SPb, *f.* 408, *op.2, d.* 377, p. 85.

German propaganda addressed the audience in the following way: “Each of you has to ask yourself: Why are there no Yids on the front line? Why do they not take part in digging trenches? Why do they occupy all the key posts of the Soviet government?”⁶¹ Although it was strongly prohibited by martial law to read or even possess German leaflets, numerous official and private documents—such as NKVD and Communist Party reports, and diaries—indicate that the civilian population of Leningrad was quite aware of the content of German propaganda. Some people read and even discussed the enemy’s leaflets.

Leningrad Authorities and Anti-Jewish Statements

From the first months of the war, the authorities were ready to qualify antisemitism as an aberrant phenomenon in their official reports on the people’s comments regarding Jews. On July 26, 1941, *Leningradskaiia pravda* described the Jewish ghettos and the murder of the Jews by the Germans in Poland, and took a definite stand against antisemitism. A month later, the newspaper published an appeal to our “Jewish brothers throughout the world” by Soviet Jewish cultural figures, which was broadcast in a radio rally on August 24, 1941. However, by the beginning of August, grassroots antisemitism had increased substantially. It was no longer a rare subject in Communist Party or NKVD reports, or one that appeared in exceptional notes in a few diaries. On August 5, 1941, the *biuro* of the Kirov *raikom*, the executive body of the district committee of the Communist Party,⁶² reported that “in recent days there were unhealthy, openly antisemitic statements voiced by female workers at the Ravenstvo factory.”⁶³ According to the report, the main reason for this was the “self-serving” behavior of some managers. The Jewish head of the

61 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

62 The Kirov district was one of the most industrially advanced districts of Leningrad, where there were numerous military plants, including the famous Kirov (former Putilov) factory.

63 TsGAIPI SPb, *f.* 417, *op.* 3, *d.* 25, *l.* 6.

Recycling Department decided to evacuate without consulting with the factory's Communist Party cell and the Kirov *raikom*. This action was in violation of traditional Communist Party rules and regulations. The deputy director for commerce, Feldman, also used his position both to employ his relatives and friends in the factory's kindergarten and to evacuate them. When questioned about his actions by the Kirov *raikom* official Sirotkina in the presence of Konstantinov, the acting secretary of the factory's party cell, Feldman called them "fascists" and "members of the fifth column." The *raikom* imposed a disciplinary punishment on Feldman, who received a written reprimand and was dismissed.⁶⁴ The general designation of this conflict as being antisemitic suggests that, during the discussion, officials linked the behavior of Feldman with his Jewish origin, which caused his strong reaction. In yet another case of antisemitism, the political worker Orlov from the same district reported growing antisemitic attitudes in one apartment bloc. According to Orlov, Communist Party member Rodionova, the source of those "negative" attitudes, related antisemitic jokes to some teenagers who thereafter beat up a Jewish boy.⁶⁵

By mid-August 1941, antisemitism was already a political issue under discussion among Leningrad's top Communist Party officials in Smolny. In a meeting on August 20, 1941, when a German offensive against the city was expected, Andrei Zhdanov paid special attention to fighting antisemitism. In his usual manner, Zhdanov called for "snapping the head of the fifth column that is trying to raise it [antisemitism] and promote it." Zhdanov went on by calling upon them to "decisively" end pro-Nazi agitation directed against the Jews. He said, "It is a fad of the enemy: Beat up the Yids! Save Russia! Kill the Jews and Communists!"⁶⁶

Zhdanov concluded his speech by calling for the NKVD and the Prosecutor's Office to act "immediately, without paying

64 TsGAIPD SPb, *f.* 417, *op.* 3, *d.* 25, *l.* 6–7.

65 TsGAIPD SPb, *f.* 25, *op.* 10, *d.* 324, *l.* 16–17.

66 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), *f.* 77, *op.* 1, *d.* 924, *l.* 13.

attention to the formalities of peacetime.”⁶⁷ On August 29, 1941, the Kirov *raikom* issued a special order regarding “anti-Soviet rumors, antisemitism, and the means to fight them.”⁶⁸ This document provided data on cases of antisemitism at the Kirov military plant, the Ravenstvo factory, other military plants, and in households. The NKVD and other law enforcement institutions were entitled to “fight against saboteurs in the Soviet interior, those who spread false rumors, and agitators of antisemitism.”⁶⁹ It was the only decision at the level of the *raikom* during the entire siege that directly dealt with antisemitism in Leningrad. Why did this occur only in the Kirov district while *Leningradskaia pravda* called for fighting antisemitism throughout the entire city?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that antisemitic sentiment was more prevalent in the city’s southern Kirov district, an industrial district where famous Soviet tanks were produced. It can be expected that the vanguard of the Soviet working class, with its ideas of internationalism, would be the last place to suspect antisemitism. Alas, the workforce at the Kirov factory almost doubled in the second half of the 1930s, and most of the new workers were peasants who held stereotypes that they had brought from their former milieus. Also, this factory, which was close to the front line, was influenced by German propaganda to a much higher degree than elsewhere in the city, especially compared with the north. Furthermore, some signs of discontent with the factory management became evident on the eve of war, when the plant’s director, Isaak Zaltsman, the future people’s commissar of the tank industry for the USSR, was not elected to the *partkom* (formally elected Communist Party committee at enterprises, institutions, kolkhozes, etc.).⁷⁰ This was highly unusual as almost 100 percent of the directors of military production plants were members of the *partkoms*.

The special attention given to antisemitism may be explained in part by the fact that several key figures in the information and

67 Ibid.

68 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 417, op. 3, d. 34, l. 2–3.

69 Ibid.

70 TsGAIPD SPb, f. P-1012, op. 2, d. 1954.

propaganda departments of the Kirov *raikom* took such cases more seriously than in other districts. Eva Tovbina and Elena Piven' were *raikom* instructors, and Lidia Kogan was in charge of its *agitpunkt* (propaganda or agitation center), which dealt directly with gathering information about public morale throughout the district. Apparently, they were more concerned with latent and open forms of antisemitism, and did their best to stop it. Toward the end of November 1941, just a few days after the fifth reduction of rations, which lowered the rations of those in the lowest ration category to just 125 grams of bread per day, the Kirov *raikom* introduced the idea of writing a collective diary⁷¹ that was intended to register the entire spectrum of opinions about the situation in the city, which *raikom* leaders believed historians would study in the future. The initiative resulted in registering “interesting facts,” including public attitudes about German leaflets. Although *raikom* secretary Kapralov believed that people censured the Germans for their leaflets, which was good in and of itself, Kogan viewed this a bit differently. She said, “Comrade Piven' and I witnessed the same phenomenon. I saw that most people did not touch the German leaflets, while some were quick to accept them. An artist who works with us said that the appeal of those leaflets was similar to that of the Black Hundreds.”⁷²

The negative attitude of the authorities toward antisemitism was not the only topic of discussion in the ideological sphere that was raised in the closed Communist Party meetings. It was a theme that was discussed in public. *Leningradskaiia pravda* reported the “negative” impact of the situation in the city, in general, and of antisemitism, in particular, on the mood of the population. On August 23, 1941, its editorial urged, “Let us be

71 See the protocol of a meeting of the Kirov *raikom*, November 26, 1941, TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4000, op. 10, d. 776, l. 1–13. Eventually, this idea failed, and the Leningrad Party Institute interviewed about 1,200 active participants of the defense and siege survivors about their wartime experiences. More than 30 respondents were Leningrad Jews who worked during the siege in the Communist Party apparatus, the city prosecutor office, military factories, and academia. The percentage of those interviewed in 1944–1945 reflected the Jews' share of the Leningrad population by the end of the siege.

72 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 4000, op. 10, d. 776, l. 1–13.

vigilant and merciless to the enemy!” and called for identifying and severely punishing all those who spread panic, rumors, and antisemitism, as well as cowards and people of little faith who tried to undermine the unity of the Leningraders.⁷³ In general, *Leningradskaia pravda* did its best to fight defeatism. In addition to those labeled by the authorities as “cowards” and “fascist spies,” there were two new categories—those with “negative attitudes,” that is, “whisperers” and “skeptics.”⁷⁴ One editorial confessed that some women were ready to “open” the city to the Germans to save their children.

The NKVD also recorded some dangerous developments. According to SPO records, there was a group in Leningrad that called for building a “new government” that would consist of “true Russian people” and would act under the motto “Russia for Russians.” Since September 21, 1941, this group produced inflammatory anti-Jewish leaflets. Although the number of those handwritten leaflets was rather small—twenty copies were found near Nevsky Prospect⁷⁵ and eight copies in the Primorskii and Petrogradskii districts. Although the secret Political Department of the NKVD did mention from time to time cases of antisemitic statements, including those written in anonymous letters, there was almost no information about antisemitism in general reports by the Leningrad NKVD. Also, the Soviet security service did not register antisemites in special records, as it did for other suspects of political crimes. Antisemitism was mentioned in a category of negative attitudes labeled as *prochie* (other).

By and large, after October 1941, NKVD and Communist Party documents do not provide any evidence of “growing” antisemitism. The trade sector as such was an easy target of critical

73 *Leningradskaia pravda*, August 23, 1941.

74 *Leningradskaia pravda*, September 25, 1941.

75 Two leaflets were glued on the walls of houses on Nevsky Prospekt (which during the war was called the Prospect of the 25th of October), and two were fixed on the doors of the Pushkin Theater. The remaining leaflets were found in mailboxes; *Arkhiv upravleniia Federal'noi sluzhby bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Sankt Peterburgu i Leningradskoi oblasti* (Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO), f. 21/12, op. 2, d. 4, l. 66.

statements and accusations by Leningraders during this period of massive starvation. Numerous individual and collective letters were sent to Smolny and to the Military Council that harshly criticized the existing system of supply—an “unfair” hierarchy of consumption, ration cards, and food distribution. However, there were only three antisemitic statements recorded by the military censors in Leningrad from the beginning of the siege until January 1943. Why was there such a gap in data about antisemitism between the SPO and Communist Party reports and censors?

First, people were well aware that antisemitism was a crime and that severe punishment could follow. Leningrad newspapers informed people about military tribunal verdicts for waging anti-Soviet or antisemitic agitation several times during the first weeks of the war. Second, the SPO received information from its agents or informants who worked among those categories of the population that were regarded by the NKVD as a potential fifth column—former members of non-Bolshevik parties, members of opposition or religious groups, as well as members of the intelligentsia. Not surprisingly, the SPO found most of the evidence of antisemitism and hate speech among artists, professors, engineers, top managers, and other white-collar employees. Simply put, there were less SPO informants among rank-and-file workers. This does not mean that the NKVD did not keep a close eye on factories. But the type of surveillance was different. All the workers at the military plants in the Soviet Union were checked and double-checked by the EKO—the prewar NKVD Economic Department.

The EKO dealt mainly with preventing acts of sabotage, wreckage, etc., while fighting antisemitism was a marginal task in terms of priorities. Thus, a bulk of information about public morale, both good and bad, including cases of antisemitism, is found in reports by Communist Party informants. It is worth noting that a substantial number of informants were politically savvy and well-educated technicians, or agitators of Jewish decent. It is no surprise that they were quite concerned with cases of antisemitic speech and reported cases to their superiors in information departments at the district level. Sometimes there were disagreements between Russian and Jewish staff at *raikom* information units about how to

treat cases of antisemitism, or how to fight German propaganda, as in the Kirov district. At the same time, the authorities constantly returned to this topic in public.

When the general military situation became critical and hundreds of deserters flooded the streets of Leningrad, and as the Soviet military command was expecting a new German offensive, *Leningradskaja pravda* published an article on September 25, 1941, by Supreme Soviet Deputy M. Kropacheva, who provided a long list of Jews who had sacrificed their lives for the Soviet motherland, or did their best to fight the Nazi invasion. Kropacheva also mentioned Article 123 of the Soviet Constitution and Stalin's words that "Communists cannot tolerate antisemitism" and, "in the USSR, antisemitism is strongly prohibited and prosecuted, because it is deeply hostile to the Soviet system."⁷⁶

The next day *Leningradskaja pravda* again called for fighting antisemitism and reported at length on the German atrocities against the Jews. It condemned the torture and killing of the Jews, and noted that there were many Jewish leaders in many walks of life in the USSR. The newspaper returned to the issue of fighting antisemitism on October 3, 1941, in response to the millions of antisemitic leaflets disseminated by the Germans. The article was titled in a traditional way for that time, "Against Antisemitism—An Agent of Fascism." In contrast to previous publications in the Soviet press, *Leningradskaja pravda* decided to explain to the readers the essence of Nazi antisemitic agitation.

An old and beloved calumny by belligerents is the statement that the Jews are all speculators and do not love to work. It was the time when some Jews along the borders of the lands inhabited by Jews had to participate in small-scale trading. However, the October Revolution brought equal rights to all nationalities, and the land ceased to remain a forbidden fruit for the Jews.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Leningradskaja pravda*, September 25, 1941. During the Russian Revolution of 1917, all restrictions of Jews in the professional sphere, including work in agriculture, in all the regions were abolished.

⁷⁷ *Leningradskaja pravda*, October 3, 1941

The paper then gave a number of examples of Jews who significantly contributed to the development of industry, education, science, and the arts in Leningrad.⁷⁸ On September 27, 1941, *Izvestiia* printed an article entitled “Nenavist’ naroda” (Hatred of the People). The article stated that according to fascist ideology, the Jews “must be destroyed.” As an example of the role of the Jews in Soviet society, the newspaper mentioned Isaak Zaltsman, the director of Leningrad’s Kirov factory, and depicted him as a person who was making vital contributions to the war effort.⁷⁹

Under Siege—the Attitudes of the Population and the Legal Qualification of Antisemitism

In September 1941, some Leningraders understood that the German occupation of the city would most likely mean the mass elimination of Jews in addition to Communist Party personnel. German propaganda and accounts from the refugees who reached the Leningrad area reinforced this understanding. Anti-Soviet and pro-German writings also appeared and circulated more frequently as the military situation deteriorated in the late summer of 1941 and as the siege began. Prior to the war, security organs had recorded an average of 30–40 anonymous anti-Soviet letters and leaflets per month. The SPO identified 42 in June 1941, and 135 in July. The following month, the number reached a peak of 286, but declined to 140 in September before increasing again later in the fall. The writings included appeals to surrender Leningrad and to make it an “open city,” or they contained nationalistic claims.

The Soviet authorities deemed the views of the radical Russian nationalists, including their negative attitudes regarding all non-Russians, especially Jews, as being anti-Soviet. A handwritten leaflet on behalf of the “*Natsional’nost’—russkii narod*” (Nationality of

78 Ibid.

79 In 1941–1945, Zaltsman was mentioned 52 times in *Pravda* and 43 times in *Izvestiia*; see Aleksei Fedorov, “Tankovyi korol’ i ‘opa’nyi general’: rozhdenie legendy ob Isaake Zaltsmane,” *Noveishaia istoriia Rossii*, 1 (2016), p. 125.

the Russian People), which the authorities found in October 1941, stated the following:

Citizens! Our “rulers,” if you will, have abandoned us utterly to the tyranny of fate, to the dung heap, you could say, and are giving the Germans the chance to bomb our residences... If our rulers, led by the worst convict among them—the Georgian Jew [hint for Stalin], or Tatar, or Gypsy—said, “Not one step back, we’ll blow the city up, but we won’t surrender it,” so you yourselves understand what’s going to happen to the children, women, old people, and sick....

Let us unite in a council of the liberation of the Russian people from the convict’s yoke, but know that only Voroshilov and Budenny are with us, and down with all the rest.⁸⁰

In the last week of September, the same idea of the necessity of Russian predominance was expressed in the letter by nurse Ekaterina Tiunina to the high military command of Leningrad, which was intercepted by the NKVD. Tiunina called for the appointment of Marshal Voroshilov as Supreme Commander of the Soviet Union, and for the end of a government led by non-Russians.⁸¹ Under interrogation, she admitted to urging people standing in lines to stage anti-Soviet demonstrations and to overthrow the Soviet government.⁸²

Notably, antisemitism was also identified among Communist Party members. However, it was deemed a remnant of prerevolutionary backwardness, or a deviation from the correct party line—the usual prewar evaluation of antisemitism. On October 7, 1941, the NKVD city head, Kubatkin, denounced the head of the Propaganda Department of the Volodarskii district, Dertin, to the *gorkom* secretary, Aleksei Kuznetsov, stating that

80 Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1944*, p. 338.

81 This letter was written “on behalf of the population of Leningrad” by Ekaterina Tiunina, who was a nurse at Botkin Hospital. Tiunina was thirty-eight years old and was the “daughter of a former sales person”; see Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5. l. 21, 28.

82 Ibid.

Dertin was “systematically drunk,” and that, when in a drunken state among nonparty people, he “trumpets” secret details about the situation at the front and makes anti-Soviet remarks, such as “the Jews are traitors and one can only despise them.” Early in the morning of October 3, Dertin, armed with a rifle and a grenade, was arrested for making defeatist comments to civil defense workers.⁸³

One may wonder how the Soviet authorities determined that anti-Jewish attitudes among the population represented anti-Soviet views and included this issue in a general political context? On October 6, the prosecutor for the Dzerzhinski district, Iakov Brill, informed Levin, the *raikom* secretary and the chairman of the district executive of Gorbunov, about the growth of pro-Nazi activity in his district. Besides “discrediting the Communist Party and Soviet leadership,” there were calls of support for Hitler and fascism—“Hitler speaks the truth.” “Our life with Hitler will not get worse,” etc.—as well as threats to kill the Communists and the Jews, should Germans take the city.⁸⁴ This issue became even more relevant when the secret Political Department of the Leningrad NKVD reported to Moscow a “sharp increase” in the number of anonymous letters of an insurgent, defeatist, or antisemitic nature. During October 1–10, 1941, there were 11 letters labeled by the SPO as defeatist, 8 designated “anti-Soviet,” and 4 identified as antisemitic.⁸⁵

Controversy arose in the ranks of the VP and the VT over the meaning of antisemitic outbursts. On October 1, 1941, prosecutor Popov complained in a letter to Zhdanov that such expressions of speech were not being prosecuted as they ought to be, that is, as anti-Soviet agitation under Article 58, which deals with counterrevolutionary crimes and sentences, ranging from five years’ imprisonment to execution. Instead, they were being prosecuted under the relatively “soft,” criminal Article 59, which addresses crimes against governance, such as the organization

83 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 408, op. 2, d. 50, l. 7–8.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid, l. 27–28.

of riots, for which the minimal sentence was three years of imprisonment. Moreover, he alleged that the VP had diminished the severity of this crime by identifying it as a criminal crime, according to Article 59, rather than a political crime, according to Article 58. He cited the example of a certain D. Ia. Rogulin, who allegedly said, "Beat the Yids. Save Russia." Although Rogulin was initially charged under Article 58.10, Popov stated that the VP had reduced the charge by convicting him under Article 59.7. However, the punishment was strict in any case. He was sentenced to seven years of hard labor and was deprived of his rights for five years. In another instance, A. T. Strunkin was heard saying in a beer hall, "Our information bureau screws everything up. We have to beat the Yids now." He repeated the phrase, "Beat the Yids." Popov claimed that the VT had convicted Strunkin under Article 59, even though he had been charged under Article 58. His sentence was five years of hard labor and three years of loss of his political rights.

The situation became especially difficult when functionaries of Jewish origin grappled with cases of antisemitism. They found themselves caught between the necessity to react to the new challenges as Jews and their wish to not cross the boundaries of general Soviet loyalty regarding internationalist ideals so as not to be accused of Jewish nationalism. In response to Popov's allegations on October, 4, 1941, a member of the VP named Erenburg stated that, since the beginning of the war, the VP had deliberated 695 counterrevolutionary cases. In a "significant number" of them, the detainee had made comments of "a pogrom nature," which is a euphemism in this context for anti-Jewish statements or actions, in addition to other inflammatory remarks. Detainees in such cases were charged with agitation, and those convicted were either shot or sentenced to long prison terms. Erenburg added that "several workers of the VP and VT, whose goal was to establish a more just juridical qualification, decided to charge the person under Article 59.7, part 2, when the accusation was solely antisemitic, and not under Article 58.10, part 2." He admitted that this classification was a mistake, as antisemitism was a "programmatic issue for fascism," but claimed cautiously that the mistake had occurred only in the second half of August and, therefore, was not a systematic error.

Erenburg blamed the VT for reclassifying cases and claimed that several members of the VP had protested the changes to both the VT and the city prosecutor. In an attempt to turn the tables on the city prosecutor, Erenburg claimed that Popov himself had sent the VP cases of antisemitic speech that had been charged under Article 59.7. He cited two examples. On August 11, 1941, a certain G. A. Bakhvalov said, “The Jews must be beaten. Beat the Yids, crush the Yids. I will go to the front. I will beat the Jews.” On August 26, 1941, A. D. Mutovkin was heard saying, “There are no Yids at the front. The day after tomorrow, we will beat the Yids.... The Yids drank our blood, and in three days we will get drunk on their blood.” The day after Erenburg wrote his letter, a member of the VT named Marchuk sought to defend himself by stating that he was not to blame for reducing the sentences.

One point on which Popov and Erenburg seemed to agree was that, beginning in the latter part of August, there was a growing tendency to prosecute antisemitic hate speech under Article 59 instead of under Article 58, as had been done up to that time. Why exactly the shift occurred is not explained. However, it seems to have been linked with the increase in reported antisemitic conversations.⁸⁶ As far as the situation in the army and navy is concerned, antisemitism was not identified by the *osobyie otдель* (special departments) as a special category, such as defeatism, dissatisfaction with commanding officers, anti-Soviet agitation, or dissatisfaction with food. For instance, the Special Department of the Baltic Fleet⁸⁷ rarely provided examples of antisemitic speech during the winter of 1941–1942.⁸⁸ Only a few antisemitic statements by servicemen of the military deployed in Leningrad were cited in reports to the Military Council in May 1942. Soldiers were heard saying that “Communists and Jews are responsible for this war. They occupy high positions and live in the rear [i.e., far from the front line] while we have to fight for them.” However, in the same report, a military technician of first rank (colonel)

86 Bidlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1944*, pp. 224–225.

87 This fleet was deployed in Kronshtadt and defended Leningrad by using submarines, naval artillery, and foot soldiers.

88 Lomagin, *Neizvestnaia blokada*, vol. 1, pp. 242–244.

I. Soloviev was heard saying that the replacement of Maxim Litvinov, the people's commissar for foreign affairs, by Molotov in May of 1939 was a big mistake, since Litvinov "would not allow rapprochement with Germany." In other words, he demonstrated his discontent with the Soviet leadership's line when they replaced Litvinov, a Jew (whose original name was Meir-Henoch Wallach), with the Russian Molotov.⁸⁹

Although Russocentrism became one of the main tendencies of Soviet policy during the war, authorities carefully guarded against allowing this phenomenon to cross the boundary of what was permitted. Thereafter, all cases in which Nazi policy regarding ethnic groups was described as a model were strictly prohibited. Authorities considered the presentation of Jews as clear Communist, anti-Russian antipodes as being anti-Soviet behavior. On November 3, 1941, the head of the SPO of the Leningrad NKVD reported attempts of the "most anti-Soviet elements to set up nationalistic groups of the fascist type." As an example of such attempts, the report referred to one artist, whose goal was to build "a counterrevolutionary organization called 'Natsist' [or Nazi]." Although the main message of this proposed project was to guarantee "the predominant position of the Russian nation in the world and to build a new world order," the NKVD hastened to arrest him, without even trying to determine whether that artist had any accomplices.⁹⁰

In the beginning of February 1942, the SPO interpreted several nationalistic statements by a group of five professors as being "fascist." This served as the basis for suspecting them of being willing to cooperate with the "German occupants." What did those professors say that so worried the NKVD? One professor from the Military-Electro-Technical Academy stated the following:

The national issue is the key issue. Germany for Germans. Russia for Russians. We, the true Russian people, wish the best for Russia, first of all, but Communists fight for the

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 245.

⁹⁰ Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 38.

idea of world revolution, and they want to build it at our expense. Take Germany. It is, first and foremost, for the Germans, and the rights of the Jews, as aliens, are reduced. Our situation is absolutely different—the Jews are entitled to all rights. They represent the dominant class, while we, the Russians, are neglected.⁹¹

Another professor who, according to the authorities, had fallen under the influence of the Nazi propaganda, claimed with bitterness that “people cannot understand that the Germans came here to liberate Russia from the Jews and the Communists, and to convert Soviet Russia into true Russia—Russia for Russians, with their own way of life.”⁹²

Thus, antisemitic statements were fostered significantly in Leningrad during the first months of the war with Nazi Germany, but they did not become the ideological backbone of a protest movement that was skeptical about Soviet reality and was even involved in some anti-Soviet activity, which was registered by the NKVD and Communist Party informants. Those who produced leaflets or sent anonymous letters to Soviet authorities rarely used antisemitic arguments. Leaflets labeled by the NKVD as “anti-Soviet” called on the authorities to undertake very specific measures, such as “opening” the city, or declaring a cease-fire in order to evacuate civilians, or simply to increase bread rations. Meanwhile, antisemitic sentiments were expressed, and sometimes there were calls for pogroms. For instance, at the end of November 1941, a handwritten leaflet by the “City People’s Committee,” which contained a sharp, antisemitic message, was circulated near Sennaia Square, where one of the biggest black markets operated. “Housewives, if you want peace and bread, set up riots in queues, smash food shops and canteens, beat Jews who run those food shops, canteens, and trusts.”⁹³

91 Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 21/12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 260.*

92 Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 21/12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 260–261.*

93 Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 21/12, op. 2, p.n. 11, tom 1, d. 4, l. 63.*

German military intelligence reported that antisemitism was growing. Having interrogated numerous Soviet POWs from the Leningrad front, it noted that, by November 1941, the number of Jews in Leningrad had dropped to 15–20 thousand people. The SD reported that the Jews still played a “decisive and maybe even bigger role in Soviet institutions.”⁹⁴ Among other things, Jews occupied a dominant position in the trade sector. German military intelligence paid special attention to the tensions between the city dwellers and those who worked at the food shops and canteens. A new wave of antisemitism was expected by the Nazis in this particular area, which remained the most sensitive of all until the lifting of the siege in January 1944.

The German security service later reported attacks on Jewish women who were favorably treated at food shops, while the militia stood by and did not intervene.⁹⁵ On December 9, 1941, German intelligence reported to the 18th Army that antisemitism is a widespread phenomenon in the city and that “most commissars are Jews.”⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, German leaflets tied “senseless” resistance with the selfishness of the Leningrad leadership and called for pogroms. On December 18, 1941, it addressed Red Army soldiers in the following way:

While you are dying from frost under the open sky, your Jewish commissars are safe. While the people of Leningrad are dying from hunger, the wives and children of the Jews found a refuge in the Urals....You are naïve. Jews condemn you to death! Put an end to the Jews! Kill them! Side with us! Save yourself and Leningrad from starving to death!⁹⁷

94 In February 1942, the SD reported about 150 thousand Jews in Leningrad; see the SD report, no. 170, February 18, 1942, the U.S. National Archives, microfilm T-175/233.

95 Ibid.

96 Peter Jahn, Margot Blank, and Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, *Blockade Leningrads 1941–1944: Dossiers = Blokada Leningrada* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004), p. 128.

97 The 18th Army, Dept. 1c, the US National Archives, microfilm T-312/1580–97.

Other reports, dated December 23, 1941, and January 19, 1942, provide some evidence about the “open discussion of the Jewish question,” the widespread use of the term “Yid,” and the “lynching of Jews.”⁹⁸ However, Leningrad NKVD materials did not support these statements. Military censors, for instance, recorded just one case of an antisemitic statement between January and September 1942.⁹⁹ The same was true with respect to NKVD informants, who reported another case of sharp criticism of the Jews.¹⁰⁰

During the first week of December, the NKVD reported that anonymous anti-Soviet letters had been sent on behalf of different organizations and groups. What matters for our purposes is not so much whether those “organizations” and “groups” existed, but how they were identified by the authors of those letters. Along with neutral names, such as “Central Salvation Committee,” or “Organizational Committee,” or “People’s Committee of Leningrad,” there were collective letters by mothers or wives of Red Army soldiers and letters signed by the “Presidium of Republicans for Great Russia,” or the “Order for the Extermination of Jews.”¹⁰¹ In general, as before, the SPO viewed antisemitism as proof of the pro-Nazi attitudes of a suspected person or group.

During the first months of 1942, perhaps the most difficult period of the siege, the NKVD evaluated anti-Jewish statements in the same general anti-Soviet context as proof of pro-Nazi activity.

98 Nikita Lomagin, *Bor’ba Kommunisticheskoi partii s fashistskoi propagandoi v period bitvy za Leningrad (1941–ianvar’ 1944)*. (PhD diss., St. Petersburg State University, 1989), pp. 131–132.

99 At the end of January 1942, a NKVD report contained an antisemitic statement by worker Lutovinov who said, “Our leaders are not seeing to the food supply of the people. Only Jews are doing well; they penetrated all the retail institutions. We cannot stand it any longer; we have to demand ending the war, otherwise, we all will die.” See Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 21/12, op. 2, p.n. 19, d. 12, l. 138*.

100 On September 5, 1942, according to the censors, one letter read, “It is hard to survive. We live for the day, expecting nothing from tomorrow. Although some people are doing well and do not feel the hardships of war, the Jews are especially lucky getting positions in food shops and canteens. They not only eat well, but they also steal a lot. They have an opportunity to provide their evacuated families with money transfers worth several thousands (of rubles) a month.” See Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 21/12, op. 2, p.n. 19, d. 12, l. 314*.

101 Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 72*.

For instance, a SPO report for January 11–20, 1942, referred to an investigation of a group of ten people, coded by the NKVD as *poputchiki* (companions). According to the NKVD agents, members of this group disseminated defeatism and glorified Nazism, and called for surrendering the city. The most powerful proof of the pro-Nazi inclinations of this group was the antisemitic statements made by its four members.¹⁰²

In mid-January, 1942, the SPO began an investigation under the code name *marodery* (looters) against a few people who waged “rebel pogrom agitation” by praising Nazism while expecting the arrival of German troops in Leningrad.¹⁰³ More or less the same ideas were expressed by a certain Peshlat, a lawyer of German descent, and his wife, a former ballet dancer. They were suspects in a criminal case under the code name *cheta* (pair). According to Peshlat, the worst-case scenario was the forced evacuation of the ethnic Germans from Leningrad before the German troops took the city. The fall of Leningrad would be “great luck” for the local German intelligentsia. “At the moment, there is fighting among two inceptions. The first one is good, and it is represented by Hitler and fascism; the second is the Yiddish, represented by the Soviet Union and America. This is unacceptable for us.”¹⁰⁴

During the last week of January 1942, the SPO reported a further escalation of anti-Soviet activities that exploited existing difficulties. In particular, there was an increase in “counterrevolutionary agitation in order to discredit the Communist Party leadership, to propagate terror against Communists, Soviet

102 For instance, Subboch and Rudnitskaia said that “one can hardly expect order when the Jews are in power. It is all our government’s fault that there are Jews in the government. If we did not have them, we would never have been in such a (terrible) situation.” Sharikov and Bogdanov believed that “soon we will catch them, the Jews, and make them eat this stew which they feed us.” See Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 182–184.*

103 One of the suspects stated, “I hate Soviet–Yid power, and it will collapse soon. Germans will come, and I will do my best too... We will build another life... I am still in a good shape. If it gets worse (with food), I will beat the Yids with a hammer, but will not die in vain from hunger.” See Arkhiv UFSB RF po SPb i LO, *f. 12, op. 2, p.n. 5, l. 190.*

104 *Ibid.*, *l. 164.*

activists, and Jews, and to spread defeatism among the citizens of Leningrad.”¹⁰⁵ On February 13, 1942, the SPO reported yet another example of antisemitic expression. In the Moscow district of Leningrad, a temporarily unemployed person, Terentiev, called “everybody to show up on the streets to demand increased food rations—to hell with the power of the Jews who want to starve us to death.”¹⁰⁶ At the end of March 1942, the SPO again referred to growing nationalism by citing representatives of the intelligentsia. The surgeon Zalivnoi said,

Our survival is (first of all) the survival of our nation. The Russian nation is strong; it will not disappear....I firmly believe that the future of Russia means the unity of all peoples under the hegemony of the Russian people....Perhaps some people will leave [the USSR], Ukraine, Belarus, for instance, and even Caucasus. Let them go. The Russian people will be all right without them.¹⁰⁷

Leningrad State University Associate Professor Vesbe claimed,

It is awful that Russia has ceased to exist as a national state. The Soviets have nothing to do with the state and Russia. The politics of internationalism is the nonsense that has led to the collapse of Russia. Russians have lived with the illusion that they are masters in their country. They do not see reality. All the key positions in the state are occupied either by Jews or other nationalities. The worst of all is the fact that the economic foundations of the country are being undermined. The Russian muzhiks who used to be the foundation of the Russian state throughout all its history have ceased to exist.¹⁰⁸

Do these examples mean that antisemitism was a dominant theme of anti-Soviet activity during this period? Perhaps not. The SPO

105 *Ibid.*, *l.* 220.

106 *Ibid.*, *l.* 252.

107 *Ibid.*, *l.* 377.

108 *Ibid.*, *l.* 378.

records demonstrate the surveillance conducted by the NKVD units and agents more than any real threat of pogroms. Having wrapped up the search for the authors of the anonymous letters in April 1942, the SPO concluded that most of them (12) had general anti-Soviet content, while letters labeled as “defeatist” were second (4), followed by 1 letter each of a “rebel” and an “antisemitic character.”¹⁰⁹

In the framework of the standard Soviet approach regarding nationalism, the mention of one form of ethnic hostility—antisemitism—inevitably indicated the nationalism of a second group, in this case, the Jews. In previous periods, accusations of Jewish nationalism could take different forms: Zionists, clericals, Bundists, etc. However, in official documents during the war, “Zionism” predominated. This was the case in Leningrad. Records from the SPO of the Leningrad NKVD include a few short reports related to alleged Zionist activity in the city as a reaction by some Jews to the growing antisemitism. These reports eventually came to naught, at least in the second part of 1942 and in 1943. However, during the crucial period for the city in the beginning of 1942, they were quite relevant. In March 1942, the SPO opened the first case against “an emerging anti-Soviet Zionist organization.” According to the SPO, the top managers of some plants—Elektrik, Krasnoe znamia, etc.—revealed their willingness to resume Zionist activity “as a reaction to the growing antisemitism in the Soviet Union.”

Also, according to the SPO, the suspects called for the need to organize themselves in order “to counter antisemitism.” Initially, the SPO began investigating a group of four prominent managers of Jewish decent, because they also led “defeatist propaganda, and criticized local authorities.” According to the SPO, the members of this group included the commercial director of the Elektrik plant, David Zelikson; the general director of the same plant, Efim Izmozik, a Communist Party member who had been awarded two medals of honor; the assistant director of Krasnoe znamia, Ilia Kazanovskii; and the chief engineer of Krasnoe znamia, Grigorii Ratner. Two prominent figures from the respective *Narkomat*

109 Ibid., I. 486.

(ministry)—Vaskanian, the deputy people's commissar of the People's Commissariat of the Electric Industry, and Barkan, the head of one of the departments of the same commissariat—were also mentioned as sympathizers of this group.¹¹⁰

The SPO records do not contain any evidence about further investigations into this case, except for the fact that a special NKVD operative was assigned to penetrate the group and “uncover the anti-Soviet plans of the group, as well as sources of growing anti-Soviet Zionist activity.” The SPO managed to recruit the son of an organizer of an illegal synagogue. This person agreed to cooperate with the NKVD out of fear of being prosecuted for “spreading provocative rumors, attendance at an illegal synagogue, and participating in anti-Soviet gatherings of clericals.” This new agent helped the NKVD discover two illegally functioning synagogues along with thirty congregants.¹¹¹

The only known open accusation of antisemitism against a top-level Leningrad official was made by Red Army Captain Aron Revzin¹¹² in January 1946. At a *raikom* meeting devoted to elections to the Supreme Soviet, Revzin said he would not support *gorkom* secretary Alexei Kuznetsov. “As a member of the Military Council of the Leningrad front in 1942, he said that comrade Kuznetsov had sent many Jews to the front for no reason, and most of them perished.” This statement cost Revzin both a Communist Party card and his job in the army.¹¹³ A similar claim was made in December 1941 against two low-level Kirov *raikom* officials by another officer of Jewish descent, D. Sluzhevskii. We will return to this matter further on.

Communist Party and military records do not contain any data that would prove Revzin's accusation. The Leningrad

110 Ibid., I, 311–312.

111 Ibid.

112 Captain Revzin was born in 1917. He was a deputy commander of an air force regiment and was deployed in Ropsha, which is near Leningrad, for political work. Revzin was a Communist Party member.

113 This fact was mentioned in a letter by A. Mikhailov, a secretary of the Krasnosel'skii *raikom*, addressed to Alexei Kuznetsov, a secretary of the Leningrad *obkom* (Communist Party regional committee) and *gorkom*, dated January 12, 1946.

authorities, at least, praised highly qualified people regardless of their nationality. Moreover, there were examples of competition for top lawyers between the Leningrad city VP and the Leningrad oblast VP. As previously mentioned, there were five prominent lawyers of Jewish origin in the Leningrad VP—Tseitlin, Tsirlin, Fradkin, Leitman, and Iagfeld—who, according to the VP's monthly roster for 1942, were assigned to fulfill the most difficult tasks of general judicial supervision: control of NKVD prisons, drafting guidelines for VP activity in districts, and so on. In 1942, a former department head for general judicial supervision in the Leningrad oblast, Tseitlin became a bone of contention between the VP of Leningrad city and the VP of the Leningrad oblast. The problem was that Tseitlin, who was temporarily transferred to the Leningrad VP in December 1941, was so good at his job that his boss, General Panfilenko, did his best to ignore two direct requests by his colleague General Baliashnikov from the Leningrad oblast VP to send Tseitlin to his previous post as soon as possible. Only when Baliashnikov begged for help from a top official in the Leningrad oblast Communist Party hierarchy, M. Nikitin, on June 2, 1942, did the situation change. However, Tseitlin's transfer was approved only four months later, on October 19, 1942. Until then, Panfilenko was not willing to lose Tseitlin, who had an enormous workload at the Leningrad VP under his supervision.¹¹⁴

Jewish Eyewitness Accounts of Life in Wartime Leningrad

Last but not least, let us turn to the voices of Jews who lived in Leningrad. How did they feel when the German army invaded the Soviet Union? There are not many documents available that could shed light on this question, and most of them come from the Russified humanitarian or technical intelligentsia. Nevertheless, there was another telling case similar to the one that Captain Revzin mentioned in 1946, which may elucidate the

114 TsGAIPD SPb, *f. 24, op. 2b, d. 24; op. 2b, d. 5890, l. 66–67.*

way various Communist Party organs in Leningrad viewed the issue of antisemitism.

Literary critic Lidiia Ginzburg lived through the siege and worked as a member of the radio committee of Leningrad, which was one of the most important propaganda tools at the time. Her account *Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka* (Notes of a Person in Blockade)¹¹⁵ describes exactly what it was like to share a city in which food, not death, preoccupied the citizens. Born in Odessa in 1902, Ginzburg moved to Leningrad in 1922, where she studied at the State Institute for Art History. She not only survived the blockade, but also defied the earlier purges as she would the antisemitism of late Stalinism. She became a mentor for young poets, such as future Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky.

Her unnerving book was often criticized for being too cool and detached. This was because she was an intellectual and, for her, the experience was as much an intellectual as a physical challenge. She did not personalize her suffering, but instead observed the reactions of others, and much of her collective account was written from the point of view of a composite figure, N. In the 120 pages of *Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka*, there is not a single word about antisemitism. In her entries from the 1940s,¹¹⁶ she avoided the theme of her Jewishness and wrote instead about “the Leningrad situation” as a whole, about the defense of Leningrad as a unique common experience, and about “the

115 Lidiia Ginzburg, *Zapisnye knizhki, vospominaniia, esse* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2002). As Eileen Battersby observed, “Her Blockade Diary is terrifying yet also calm, as surreal as extreme hunger must be, when suddenly the sensation is one of floating. There are factual descriptions of how one would assess exactly how much physical effort could one justify expending on standing up or walking down the stairs. Gradually, beyond the gnawing hunger, it is the state of absolute weakness. The thought that even moving in your bed would dislodge the heap of blankets and clothing that were failing to keep the cold out”; see Eileen Battersby, “In praise of Lidiya Ginzburg Blockade Diary,” *Irish Times*, January 27, 2015, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-praise-of-lidiya-ginzburg-s-blockade-diary-1.2081435> (accessed on November 10, 2020). For the English version of the book that is a translation of the Soviet era publication in 1984, see Lidiya Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary* (London: Harvill Press, 1995).

116 Ginzburg, *Zapisnye knizhki, vospominaniia, esse*, pp. 184–185

Russian character.” She described the siege as a decisive moment in the city’s epic history and depicted the Leningraders who managed not to panic.

Leningrad State University professor and the first woman who chaired the Classic Literature Department, Olga Freidenberg, was a cousin of the poet Boris Pasternak. She too managed to survive the siege. Freidenberg wrote her account about the blockade, “*Osada cheloveka*.”¹¹⁷ Freidenberg was a key theorist of twentieth-century Russian humanities, although she remains largely unread. Freidenberg described the experience of daily life under siege, taking the position of an anthropologist and ethnographer with regard to her own experience. Her notes are distinguished by an acute political orientation—field observations along with theoretical generalizations, formulated in the categories of philosophical anthropology and political philosophy.¹¹⁸ She drew a detailed picture of a situation of despair in the city on the eve of the blockade and provided a wide spectrum of opinions by Leningraders in August and in the fall of 1941, especially when the official media did its best to conceal the devastating situation at the front from the population.

To the thirsty soul of the Soviet citizen, *Informbiuro* began to offer empty Homer type formulations....As a result, rumors spread out....[the authorities] created a special system aimed at hiding [Soviet] military failures, but [the people] created their own system of decoding these information reports—formulations.¹¹⁹

A few days later, she made another observation.

117 O. M. Freidenberg, “*Osada cheloveka*,” *Minuvshie: istoricheskii al'manakh*, 3 (Paris: Atheneum, 1987), pp. 7–44.

118 See Irina Paperno, “*Osada cheloveka*: Blokadnye zapiski Ol'gi Freidenberg v antropologicheskoi perspective,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 3:139 (2016), https://www.nlobooks.ru/magazines/novoe_literaturnoe_obozrenie/139_nlo_3_2016/article/11966/ (accessed on November 10, 2020).

119 Freidenberg, “*Osada cheloveka*,” p. 10. This publication includes excerpts from nine notebooks that Freidenberg kept during the war. These records are now in the Hoover Institution Archives.

I walk and see depressed people. Everybody knows that our army has suffered ugly setbacks....There is some who talk about the betrayal of command and massive executions. There are no munitions. Only brave soldiers resist the advance of the German army.¹²⁰

Freidenberg provided a detailed account of the functioning of the social institutions, both public and private. She paid special attention to the food distribution hierarchy, the organization of civilian evacuations, the dynamic of queues for bread, new types of crimes related to hunger, new forms of barter and donation, and, finally, the changed family structure in the situation of severe food shortages, mutual interdependence, and lack of even primitive sanitation. Freidenberg revealed the changes in the official language of propaganda—“old Slavic and archaic words are in use”—and the main themes of conversations outdoors—“people talk about death and soups, cutlets from cabbage.”

However, what most interested her was the mechanism of power, both the higher and the lower echelons. Having described the administrative rules and regulations, she discovered the role of individuals who enjoyed power, be it Stalin or the city mayor Petr Popkov; the rector of Leningrad State University or the dean of the Philological Faculty; secretaries, food store managers, housekeepers, or janitors. It seems that in Freidenberg's story, nationality, Russian or Jewish, did not play any role in those power relations. Much like Ginzburg's account, Freidenberg did not mention wartime antisemitism, although her diary contains a great deal of critical comments on various politically sensitive issues. One may assume that she would hardly have missed such an important phenomenon as antisemitism were it widespread. Perhaps it was not openly present in her inner circle.

There is almost no mention of antisemitism during the siege in the very detailed diary by architect Esfir' Levina,¹²¹ who

120 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

121 Esfir' Levina was born in St. Petersburg in 1908. She graduated from Leningrad Architect Institute in 1929 and then worked in Central Asia and in the design bureaus of Leningrad. When the war began, she was in charge of camouflaging

worked in the Design and Planning Department of Leningrad's Executive Committee (city government). She witnessed despair and the enormous human loss among Leningrad's architects, many of whom were Jews, and she was very critical about every single unfair deed committed either by her associates, neighbors, and even relatives. The only entry that contains a reference to the topic of antisemitism was made on July 17, 1942, when she described the content of newly disseminated German leaflets. Levina was surprised that those leaflets did not make any claims that the "Yids and commissars" caused the city's ordeal.¹²²

Almost all of the several hundred interviewees in the famous Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, which was conducted shortly after the end of World War II, also rejected the hypothesis of state-sponsored antisemitism in the USSR during the war, while late Stalinism was viewed as an about-face in this respect.¹²³ What is more important is that they do not mention cases of grassroots antisemitism in Leningrad. One Jewish engineer found the question about antisemitism in Leningrad before and during the war to be inappropriate, stating that there were no national based antagonisms in the Soviet Union. He reduced the whole problem of antisemitism to Stalin and his personal perception of Jews.

National policy completely depends on Stalin. If today (1950) Stalin says that the Jews suffered because of Hitler and, for this reason, they deserve special care, everybody will glorify them in the press. But if he says that all Jews are cosmopolites, Jews will be hounded in all the newspapers and meetings.¹²⁴

the eastern sector of the Leningrad front and came back to the city in January 1942. Her diary covers the period of January 12, 1942, until July 23, 1944. See V. Kovalchuk, ed., *Chelovek v blokade: Novye svidetel'stva* (St. Petersburg: Ostrov, 2008).

122 Ibid., p. 178.

123 Harvard Interview Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A: vol. I, no. 4, p. 24; vol. II, no. 18, p. 61; vol. III, no. 25, p. 51; vol. III, no. 28, p. 18; vol. IV, no. 32, p. 40; vol. IV, no. 34, p. 34; vol. V, no. 56, p. 34; vol. VI, no. 80, p. 12, <https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/static/collections/hpsss/index.html> (accessed November 10, 2020); see also Lomagin, *Neizvestnaia blokada*, vol. 1, p. 423.

124 The Jewish engineer who was interviewed for the project was 40–45 years old.

At the same time, this interviewee demonstrated high ethnic sensitivity to the issue of Jewish behavior in war that contradicted his previous statements. “There was a clanship in the army...Jews neither drank, nor brawled, nor engaged in sports...but they fought well. They fought up to the end and, for their bravery, they were awarded many medals.”¹²⁵

There are at least a few documents in the Communist Party archives that reveal that interethnic relations in August and in the autumn of 1941 were much more complicated. In December 1941, Communist Party member and third-rank military engineer Sluzhevskii wrote a *zaiavlenie* (official letter) to Leningrad NKVD boss Kubatkin about antisemitic behavior in the Kirov *raikom* in August 1941. Ironically, this was the only letter to officially condemn antisemitism in late August of 1941. The following is Sluzhevskii’s account:

Prior to my mobilization into the Red Army in mid-August [1941], I worked as a chairman of the *artel* [productive cooperative] *Teplokhim*...and I was approached by a secretary of our [Communist] Party cell Anna Alekseeva... on the issue of being drafted into the *Narodnoe opolchenie* [people’s militia]. In order to clarify the situation with this draft, I recommended that she visit the *raikom*, and she did so. Upon her return from the *raikom*, she looked very upset, and when I asked her about the reasons for her bad mood, Alekseeva said that she received a clearly antisemitic task from the *raikom* instructors Volokitina and Sirotkina.

He graduated from the Leningrad Technological Institute and worked as an engineer. He was characterized as follows: “He is absolutely pro-Soviet...I had a feeling that I was interviewing a member of the Communist Party...[he] is the most interesting product of the Soviet system of education. He was the first Jew whom I interviewed. In response to my question about why other Jews do not show up for an interview, he said that they were afraid and that they will take part in the project only when they come to the United States. To my question about whether there was antisemitism in the Soviet Union (in the 1950s), he answered affirmatively.” See the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, vol. XIV, ‘A’ Schedule, no. 260, pp. 3, 28, 36; ‘B’ Schedule, no. 260.

125 *Ibid.*, Schedule ‘A’, no. 260, pp. 29, 36.

Hence, she found herself in a very tricky situation since, on the one hand, she had to follow the *raikom* order but, on the other hand, as a [Communist] Party member she felt that this task was anti-party and anti-state. This task was twofold: First, to enlist in the people's militia all Jews working in the *artel* regardless of their wishes; second, to disregard their physical conditions. Volokitina and Sirotkina expressed many antisemitic theories, such as all Jews are cowards; they are the first to hide during bombings; they could defend their Birobidzhan, etc. I cannot recall all the details as plenty of time has since passed. Well, I went immediately to the *raikom* with Alekseeva and to apprise comrade Protopopov, who was the head of the Department of Agitation. Protopopov got very angry about the incident and ordered me to submit a written statement.

Having arrived in the city today for business, I visited the Kirov *raikom* and found out that the case of Volokitina and Sirotkina was not investigated and both instructors—antisemites—still work at the *raikom*. Believing that such a situation fundamentally contradicts existing views by the state vis-a-vis antisemites, I am asking to consider my statement and to take appropriate measures.¹²⁶

Kubatkin forwarded this statement to Smolny. On December 22, 1941, less than ten days after the head of the Leningrad NKVD received Sluzhevskii's statement, a detailed report on the case was prepared by Communist Party officials at the *gorkom*. The report said that "the investigation did not confirm as facts antisemitic attitudes by Kirov *raikom* instructors comrades Volokitina and Sirotkina as presented by Communist Party member D. Sluzhevskii"¹²⁷ They noted the following:

Comrade Volokitina was given the task of enlisting workers into the people's army. She criticized comrade Alekseeva

126 TsGAIPD SPb, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 990, l. 74.

127 Ibid., l. 79.

for her unsatisfactory work in this matter at the *artel* Teplokhim. Alekseeva said that there is nobody at the *artel* who physically qualifies for the people's army. In turn, Volokitina named several members of the *artel* (some of whom were Jews) who were fit for the army. Volokitina made Alekseeva improve her work recruiting for the people's militia. Concerning Sirotkina, according to the report, she "did not take part in any conversations with Alekseeva and Sluzhevskii."¹²⁸

Indeed, it is impossible to provide a complete account of what happened at the offices of the Kirov *raikom* in mid-August 1941. What is clear is that the Communist Party was seeking to recruit new soldiers everywhere, and its apparatus checked and double-checked every institution, large or small, to find people physically fit for duty. Volokitina and Sirotkina were doing their job, perhaps crossing a red line. Protopopov, who seemed to sympathize with Sluzhevskii and insisted on submitting a written statement about improper behavior by Volokitina and Sirotkina, was in charge of propaganda and agitation, and so the whole issue of interethnic relations was within his domain, while the main objective of Volokitina and Sirotkina was different: their superiors in Smolny assessed their performance by the number of new recruits.

Perhaps, having felt that they had overstepped the line with Alekseeva, Volokitina and Sirotkina initiated an audit of the *artel* Teplokhim. In general, low-level Communist Party officials did not do this unless something outrageous had happened. Audits or revisions were the responsibility of different institutions, police, or the People's Commissariat of State Control. In one of the most industrial districts of Leningrad, such an audit was exceptional when German troops were approaching the city. The audit "revealed illegal expenditures of the *artel's* resources by Sluzhevskii and Alekseeva. Alekseeva was evacuated thereafter from Leningrad with no authorization from the *raikom*."¹²⁹ The

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

fact that Sluzhevskii was not prosecuted for an alleged crime as head of the *artel* suggests that the initial goal of the audit had nothing to do with the *artel's* finances but rather was a means for two Communist Party officials, who at minimum had committed a serious political blunder, to defend themselves by hurting the credibility of the complainants, Alekseeva and Sluzhevskii.

Conclusion

Controversial and anecdotal data on antisemitism leave questions unanswered. What can definitely be said about prewar Leningrad and the situation in the city during the first year of the siege is as follows: First, grassroots antisemitism did exist on the eve of the war and became an essential part of public attitudes in 1941–1942. Moreover, it became a matter of concern for Soviet authorities in the Communist Party and the NKVD from August 1941 until the spring of 1942. The main reasons for the intensification of antisemitic hate speech were not only Nazi propaganda, but also the search for a new identity during World War II. In addition, the few cases of misbehavior by some managers who hurried to leave Leningrad without proper authorization fueled antisemitic feelings among some of the population.

Second, there is no evidence that the Communist Party and the NKVD were unwilling to fight antisemitic hate speech. In fact, the SPO referred to this as key proof of pro-Nazi propaganda. At the same time, there is dissonance between the data about antisemitism in besieged Leningrad provided by Nazi intelligence and by the Soviet secret police. The former believed antisemitism became an important trend in public attitudes by the winter of 1941–1942. The latter also reported a “sharp” increase in the number of cases of antisemitic hate speech but, as the NKVD records show, it represented insignificant growth in absolute terms, from one or two cases per month to five or six during the fall of 1941 and the winter of 1941–1942 in a city of almost 2 million people. The testimonies of some Soviet POWs and defectors caused German intelligence to believe that “natural antisemitism was aroused

among the Russians.” This observation may be partially true for conscripts, who were for the most part from the villages.

Third, there are numerous facts that prove the genuine willingness of the Communist Party to avoid the spread of antisemitic hate speech. Soviet propaganda did its best to reveal the true face of Nazism and its goals during the war even before the siege began. In August 1941, Leningrad Communist Party leader Andrei Zhdanov and the Kirov *raikom* paid special attention to fighting antisemitic hate speech among workers. In September 1941, the Communist Party newspaper, *Leningradskaia pravda*, devoted several op-eds to countering antisemitism, taking into account the intensive antisemitic propaganda by Nazi Germany and the antisemitic hate speech voiced in several city factories. The military procuracy and the military tribunal of the Leningrad front discussed the classification of antisemitism at length, according to the criminal code. The Leningrad SPO reported all registered cases of antisemitism to its headquarters about every ten days.

Fourth, eyewitness accounts by some Leningraders of Jewish origin also prove that antisemitism did not affect their lives during the siege, at least among Russified, white-collar workers in 1941–1942. There were two single cases: those of Sluzhevskii and Revzin, who accused Communist Party officials of unnecessarily sending Jews to the front in August of 1941 and in the summer of 1942. In general, the Communist Party institutions acted according to their bureaucratic logic: where you stand depends upon where you sit. If the Communist Party Propaganda Departments at all levels viewed antisemitism as a real threat and orchestrated appropriate political campaigns in the press and radio, other Communist Party bodies that dealt with military conscription did not care much about how their activity was perceived by the different strata of the Leningrad population, including the Jews. The major concern of Volokotina, Sirotkina, and similar low-level officials was the conscription of as many people as possible.

Beyond these cases, there is no evidence in the archival records that any campaign of such a kind ever existed in Leningrad. Moreover, skilled laborers and most people who were not able to work were effectively evacuated from the city in the spring

and summer of 1942. Finally, according to military censors and SPO data, the vast majority of city dwellers did not believe Nazi propaganda and, by and large, they remained loyal to the basic principles of internationalism. Following the mass evacuations of civilians, including the Jews, in the spring and summer of 1942, antisemitism in Leningrad declined sharply. Only after the siege ended and people began to return to the city did new conflicts over limited resources, such as housing, privileged jobs, etc., emerge, prompting some growth of antisemitism.



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