

# Siege of leningrad



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The Germans were some of the most strategic army organizations in the world during the Second World War. By the beginning of the year nineteen forty, Hitler by leading German Army had conquered and asserted their authority in most of European countries. The few remaining ones like Russia were still resisting German occupation. As a result, Germans launched an operation known as Operation Barbarossa. One of the main objectives of this operation was to capture the Russian town of Leningrad. Army Group North was given the peculiar task of capturing and occupying the town of Leningrad. This town may have been deemed as a highly strategic town to Russians because not only was it a political hub, but also it had the most advanced Soviet military facilities. Soviet Baltic Fleet and various factories suited for manufacturing arms were located in this region. Moreover, it was Russia's former capital and a symbol that rekindled memories of the Russian Revolution which served to unite Russian citizens towards a common course. This region accounted for almost eleven percent of Russia's total industrial output and was the economy hub for the Russians. The goal of this essay is to highlight the events leading to the eventual takeover of Leningrad by the Germans; to discuss why the Germans decided to encircle the city instead of crushing it; and the lives of the Russians living in the besieged city. Furthermore, it will enlighten us on how the Russians were treated by the Germans during the three year siege; the feelings of the Russians towards the Germans; how they survived during the three year occupation; and their eventual rescue from the brutal hands of the Germans. Hopefully, it will refresh our memories on the atrocities and inhuman acts committed by the Germans under Hitler's leadership during the Second World War (Simmons & Perlina 2005).[tUser2181]

Wilhelm Ritter Von Leeb led the Army Group North; he was a field marshal in the German Army, and they marched towards Leningrad with a sole objective of capturing the city. The Germans had the aid from the Finnish forces, who occupied the northern region of Leningrad. These forces advanced towards Leningrad from the north while the German forces that were occupying territories from the south, advanced towards Leningrad from the southern regions. Their ultimate objective was to capture the city. However, circumstances occurred which forced them to change tactics and lay siege on the town of Leningrad. Such circumstances included the recall of some sections of the German army by Adolf Hitler. Also, Hitler sought to reinforce his other army on the Western front because the Russians were stronger and thus overwhelming his forces. Both the Finnish and German forces were to circle the town of Leningrad and cut off any communication with the outside world. Apparently, the blockade was to be maintained on the town for as long as the Russians kept resisting occupation of Germany. Specifically, this blockade was to isolate Leningrad from the rest of Russia; prevent any supplies be it medications, food or even vehicles from entering the town. They believed that this torture would eventually lead the Russians into submission; however, this was not to be as the Russians survived and freed themselves from the Germans (Granin 2007).[tUser2182]

Fourth Panzer Group made swift advance in an attempt to capture the city of Pskov; the group had been operating on the Eastern side of a region known as Prussia. Following their quick progress, the Panzer group eventually reached Luga and Novgorod. These two regions were within the operational view and reach of the target town of Leningrad. Unfortunately, they

experienced some seriously harsh resistance from a group of the Russian soldiers. These soldiers were deployed there by Leningrad's Council of Deputies to defend the area against any possible invasion by the Germans. This resistance severely altered Germany's plans of advancing towards Leningrad. Nevertheless, a section of the army known as the Eighteenth Army managed to maneuver the Russians, and this was despite their small numbers (Salisbury & Harrison 1969[tUser2183] ).

They managed to power their way through to Oskov and Pskov. The Russians were retreating; this helped the army to advance quickly in an attempt to attain more territory. The Russians thought it was wise to put up their defense lines immediately on the outskirts of Leningrad. The Eighteenth army eventually managed to capture the town of Oskov and Pskov on the tenth of July of the year ninety forty one. They used these strategic gains in positions to advance quickly and captured the towns of Narva and Kingisepp. From these positions, they were able to evaluate their progress, monitor activities in the regions surrounding Leningrad, and gauge the strengths and weakness of the Russians. They continued advancing towards Leningrad, but they changed their direction of the advancement in that they passed through the Luga River. This was of importance because it enabled the Germans to establish siege positions from the southern areas which let them to isolate and cut off supplies to Leningrad. The Finnish army moved from the North towards Leningrad with an aim of isolating it from that direction. With the advancement of both the German and Finnish armies, Leningrad was to be isolated and cut off from the rest of Russia. Apparently, there were some fractions of the German army which were missing in the early stages of

Operation Barbarossa. This was because the Fourteenth and Seventh Army were still defending German positions in various regions of the country. The Fourteenth Army was to defend Murmansk while the Seventh Army was to guard positions at Ladoga Karelia; both of which were still encountering harsh resistance from the determined Russians. The Eighth Army, on the other hand, initially participated in the siege where they were advancing from the North. However, Hitler decided to reassign them to the Northern front for reinforcement thus halted their operations. Eventually, the Northern front separated into Leningrad and Karelian front as it became apparent that the task of controlling activities between the regions of Murmansk and Leningrad had overwhelmed the Front headquarters.

Hitler's orders to the German Army on the sixth of August of nineteen forty one were to prioritize Leningrad before Donetsk basin and Moscow.

Germany's leaders and specifically Hitler had geared more resources and manpower towards capturing Leningrad. Hitler believed that capturing Leningrad would save Germans a lot of army casualties, resources and time spent on the offensive efforts. From August of nineteen forty one to January of nineteen forty four, Germans had established their authority in most regions surrounding Leningrad to the extent that many things that occurred between the Arctic Ocean and Ilmen Lake was directly their business. As a result, they controlled all communication and transportation routes to and from the region. Therefore, they severed all the communication links to the region which saw the region of Leningrad isolated from the rest of Russia and world in general (Lubbeck & Hurt 2010[tUser2184] ).

The Finnish army and intelligence were tremendously valuable to Hitler's plans. This is because Hitler directly involved them in most of the operations that he carried out in Leningrad. The Finnish saw this as a repayment to the kindness and help Hitler had offered them during the years, especially in their battles with other nations during the First World War. The Finnish provided necessary intelligence and manpower, which were extremely influential in the eventual siege of Leningrad. Directive twenty one had stipulated the Finnish role in Leningrad. Hitler formulated these directives to guide Operation Barbarossa. Under these directives, the Finnish were supposed to weaken the Russians by barricading Leningrad from either side of Lake Ladoga, to the west. Moreover, the Finnish found a way of getting into the Soviet intelligence and breaking some of the codes used by the Soviet military intelligence. German military intelligence was given these broken codes, and they used them to monitor the Soviet military activity and intercept some of their operations. In August of the year nineteen forty one, the Finnish armies were within eleven miles (twenty kilometers) from the northern regions of Leningrad and were attacking from the north. East Karelia is on the east of Lake Ladoga, and the Finnish soldiers passed through this town attacking from the east. Finnish soldiers were better organized in their attacks; they passed via Karelian Isthmus after they successfully defeated Soviet soldiers in the regions of Beloostrov and Kirjasalo. By doing this, they pushed the Soviet defenses further towards Leningrad making it possible for the Germans to advance with a lot of ease. Furthermore, the German army had straightened their frontline such that it passed closer to the Gulf of Finland shores and areas bordering the city of Leningrad, making it easy to monitor and intercept the activities of the

Soviet forces. By doing this, they enabled Finnish soldiers to accomplish many objectives which Hitler had set; therefore, they stopped the progress of their movements. Finnish soldiers were re-deployed back to the East areas of Karelia to defend their positions and reinforce the Germans, who were struggling to crush the resistance in some key towns south to the city of Leningrad. From then, henceforth, the Finnish had little participation in the affairs of the German armies over the city of Leningrad. They only came in for reinforcements when called upon by the German military service (Goure 1981[tUser2185] ).

It is worth mentioning that, by August thirtieth, German soldiers had managed to destroy the only remaining rail link that connected Leningrad to the rest of Russia. Additionally, the Germans destroyed the only remaining land connection to Leningrad when they arrived at Lake Ladoga on the eighth of September. Then, bombing of the city started from the outside, and the Germans encircled and took over Leningrad (Klaas 2010[tUser2186] ).