

“IN THE SCALE OF NATURE EACH SEED IS IMPORTANT.” SOCIAL  
TRANSFORMATION, FOOD, AND THE SIEGE OF  
LENINGRAD, 1941-1942

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A Thesis  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF ARTS

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May 2013

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## **ABSTRACT**

The 900 day German blockade of Leningrad fostered an environment in which social relationships, which were pruned and altered during the 1930s, were reinvigorated and reinvented by Leningraders. By the outbreak of the war in the summer of 1941, Stalinist social engineering policies had eroded previously normalized social connections and networks. At the height of the Terror, it became beneficial and advantageous for Soviet citizens to cut off many of their social relationships that had been built up over years. The family became the site of the primary emphasis of social interaction. The strengthening of the family system under Stalin created family units that were remarkably elastic and durable. This familial elasticity allowed Leningraders to reknit social relationships during the siege which became primary as food became central to survival. Without intense monitoring and oversight from the state, Leningraders were forced to rekindle social ties and relationships to survive.

To the of City of Saint-Petersburg...

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

By the winter of 1941, the German blockade of Leningrad had reduced the city to rubble and its population to starvation. Urban life became dominated by the quest to find caloric sustenance in any form. In these dark days of January 1942, Vera Sergeevna Kostrovitskaia, a young ballet instructor, was perplexed by the advice impressed upon her by her superior, Lidiia Semeonova Tager, the wife of the head of Leningrad district-wide provisions. Tager, in attempting to persuade Vera to abandon her aging mother employed an ideological argument congruent with Stalinist social policies of the 1930s—namely the subjugation of family to the needs of the state as a demonstration of state loyalty. Tager claimed that Vera’s mother had “the responsibility to die,” because, “a young life is needed by the government, but an old one is not.”<sup>1</sup> The Party needed more able bodies for the war effort and fewer dependent mouths to feed. Lidiia Tager then provided Vera with a shining example to emulate. Tamara Bogdanova, a young, up-and-coming ballerina at the Kirov Theater, abandoned her “mother in an empty apartment for five days and never once brought her anything to eat,” a choice that Tager lauded, for “one must think about one’s own life.”<sup>2</sup> The tone and rationale of Tager’s argument is representative of the blockade as a socially transformative event. Tager’s rationalization for matricide by neglect demonstrates the continuation of a political culture of denunciation that precipitated a breakdown of various social relationships during the 1930s. Although Tager couched it in different rhetoric – making a patriotic choice rather

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<sup>1</sup> Vera Sergeevna Kostrovitskaia, *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women’s Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose*, eds. Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Kostrovitskaia, *Writing the Siege*, 50.

than unmasking counterrevolutionaries in society's midst – her assessment of necessary familial sacrifices reveals the tension in state policies that paradoxically eroded the most intimate of social relationships while treating the family as central to the survival of the state.

Vera's portrayal and critique of party member L.S. Tager represents how the 872-day siege provided an environment in which individuals had to renegotiate and reformulate new systems of social relationships in an effort to survive. The conflict between Vera and her superior Tager is demonstrative of the reinvestment in social networks and relations—amongst familial networks, fictive kin, neighbors, the community, and the wider public—that were engendered because of the necessities of blockade life. For Tager, the family (and social relationships at large) was something that could be tossed away on a whim, all in the name of survival. But the siege, rather than serving as a new trauma that corroded social relationships, led instead to the creation and revival of extended social networks that largely crystallized around survival, and thus food. The exigencies of the blockade dramatically impacted how individuals re-crafted their relationships. From the intimate setting of the family, to larger kinship networks and community interaction, the blockade forced Leningraders to reinterpret the social norms and social relationships that had become normalized throughout the 1930s under Stalin.

Leningrad's blockade years 1941-1944 demarcate a break with the social system that had solidified during the pre-war period. The march towards a socialist utopia, begun in earnest with Stalin's unveiling of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928, unleashed successive waves of government-led social engineering on a national scale. Collectivization in the countryside and industrialization in new and old urban centers

were coupled with policies that sought to reinvent the most intimate of social constructions, the family, and destroy bourgeois notions of hierarchical gender relations, a policy which effectively allowed millions of women to enter the workforce.<sup>3</sup> The culmination of Stalinist political ideology, the Great Terror of 1936-1938, radically altered not only the social composition of the Soviet Union, but reformulated myriad social structures from the family, through public space, the workplace, and urban communities.

The Terror socially destabilized the entire population and the late 1930s was a period of profound manipulation of social relationships. Rather than a straightforward “targeted surgical strike ‘from above’,” much of the Terror was experienced from below.<sup>4</sup> It was a mass political campaign that targeted “wreckers,” “family circles,” and “toadies,” and left not a family unscathed.<sup>5</sup> The late 1930s was a period of profound manipulation of social relationships. Given the public paranoia, fostered and disseminated by the government, it became no longer safe, or justifiable, to continue to maintain extra-familial relationships. But increasingly, as Wendy Z. Goldman argues, “some people chose to jettison [even] family” as political loyalties trumped any familial relationship.<sup>6</sup> Although people continued to get married, go to work, and be involved in the community, individuals survived largely by creating distinct public and private personas. By the outbreak of the Soviet-German war in June 1941, Soviet society had

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<sup>3</sup> Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 296-336. See also: Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia. Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: the Social Dynamics of Repression* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Goldman, *Terror and Democracy*, 8, 15, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

become insular and compartmentalized. The siege would change this social dynamic as individuals began to reknit social networks that had deteriorated during the 1930s.

This thesis investigates the interplay between the individual and larger networks of social connection during the blockade of Leningrad. Rather than attempting a wide analytical study of relationships, the reformulation of social networks and relationships will be investigated by looking at the main site of private and public interaction, food. By the beginning of October 1941, notes Michael Jones, food had become *the* “dominant factor in everyday life.”<sup>7</sup> Sites of food interaction—the domestic setting of the apartment, the re-extension of formerly latent social connections, the bread queue—allow the historian to trace how food provided the medium around which Leningraders effectively broke with social engineering of the 1930s. Trust was an implicit and integral part of this transformation. Focusing on food (and all things food) demonstrates how food acted as a transformative site for the reinterpretation of the relationship between the individual Leningrader and “the concentric circles of connection” that radiated out of the home and into the community.<sup>8</sup>

Wartime and the particular conditions of the siege allowed citizens to regain more control over their lives in part because the state was forced to loosen restrictions and was diverted from extreme social oversight. Cut off from mainland Russia, besieged Leningrad provided an atmosphere in which Soviet citizens could manipulate and navigate their lives with greater freedom than in any period since Stalin’s ascendancy in 1928. While the Party still maintained its monopoly on power in the besieged city, Leningraders were able to actively renegotiate and reformulate their social relationships

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Jones, *Leningrad: State of Siege* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2008), 142.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Simmons, “Leningrad Culture under Siege,” in *Preserving Petersburg: History, Memory, Nostalgia*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Stephen M. Norris (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 168.

between extended family networks and close friends and reenter the public space with an entirely different attitude. In fact, given the primacy of the military defense of the city, Leningraders, both individually and collectively, had to re-establish social codes that governed relationships under siege life.

Scholarship on the siege is prolific. Most studies are qualitatively similar, reflecting nearly identical methodologies and approaches. Throughout the Soviet thaw and continuing through post-Soviet Russia, academics published hundreds of monographs, narratives, diaries and memoirs on varied aspects of the siege, albeit heavily limited in scope and scale because of poor access to governmental, *oblast*, or party records. In comparison to Russian scholarship, its Western counterpart is limited, but it does have a lengthy history, stretching back to Leon Goure's 1962 publication, *The Siege of Leningrad*. Goure devotes several instances to a discussion of food and famine in the siege, but they are largely a description of hunger-related ailments – “weakness, dizziness, swelling of the hands and legs, painfulness of the joints.”<sup>9</sup> Goure devotes no attention to the social aspects of food, instead emphasizing the sheer scale of starvation and dearth. Harrison Salisbury's classic study of the blockade, *900 Days*, continues Goure's emphasis on starvation. Harrison's work begins to demonstrate the varied survival techniques adopted by the population during the siege and takes direct aim at Soviet triumphalist narratives with the inclusion of a chapter entitled, “Not All Were Brave.” But, neither Harrison nor Gore spends any time discussing the transformative aspects of siege life. Understandably their focus is on detailing the mass starvation of the

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<sup>9</sup> Leon Goure, *The Siege of Leningrad* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 160-163. Goure was the first historian – Western or Soviet – to acknowledge that cannibalism occurred during the winter of 1941-1942, a subject that was of extreme taboo given the Soviet Union's triumphalist narrative which emphasized Leningrad's cohesion and survival and greatly downplayed the extent of dearth and famine.

city's population—in February 1942 the daily mortality rate ran as high as ten thousand—but one must move past the constant trend of emphasizing the sheer horror of the first year of the siege, and begin to delve deeper into the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of Leningrad's populace.<sup>10</sup> Only by doing this can the historian begin to illuminate the numerous ways in which the siege was catalytic, prompting and necessitating social alterations across the population and how, as an individual and a community, Leningraders survived the three-year blockade.

Within the past two decades a wave of innovative historical scholarship has reformulated the field. John Barber's edited collection, *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-1944*, uses Leningrad as a microcosm for assessing famine, death, and crisis management, in an attempt to glean valuable lessons about the urban environment and food scarcity, particularly "the coping practices adopted by individuals, families and small groups."<sup>11</sup> Although Barber asserts that social relations and survival techniques form the basis of the collection, by and large the majority of the chapters focus on mental health, child life expectancies, famine scale, or physiological prerequisites for survival.

The majority of the literature bypasses any thorough analysis of the siege as a transformative event, specifically in relation to the re-extension and renegotiation of social relationships and their structures. Recently, however, historian Cynthia Simmons investigated the reorganization of social networks, arguing that the "web of communal connections" that were severely restricted during the previous decade, "began to expand

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<sup>10</sup> For the most significant works on the siege period see: Leon Goure, *the Siege of Leningrad* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962) Harrison Salisbury, *The 900 Days: the Siege of Leningrad* (New York, New York: De Capo Press, 1969); David Glantz, *the Battle for Leningrad, 1941-1944* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Michael Jones, *Leningrad: State of Siege* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Anna Reid, *Leningrad: the Epic Siege of World War II, 1941-1944* (New York: Walker & Company, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> John Barber, introduction to *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-1944*, eds. John Barber and Andrei Dzenishevich (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 8.

into the public arena.”<sup>12</sup> Simmons, however, instead of unpacking the varied mutations and breaks with the social arrangements of the 1930s, immediately links this re-extension of social relationships with “the spiritual connectedness of Russian souls—*sobornost*’.”<sup>13</sup> Given that her inquiry is based around the ‘city’ this makes sense, but a middle ground is needed between the stark monographs that marginalize the siege as a socially transformative experience and Simmons’s work, which too easily connects the re-emergence of extended social networks with a metaphysical and centuries-old solidarity.

There is one qualification that needs to be addressed relating to an historical analysis on social structures during the siege, specifically the impact of starvation on the population. The liminal character of siege life engendered a ‘flight or fight’ reaction that was manifested in what Cynthia Simmons calls “the extremes of personality.”<sup>14</sup> In his memoir of blockade life, Dmitrii Likhachev observed that: “In starvation people showed themselves, revealed themselves, freed themselves from any kind of trumpery: some turned out to be wonderful, unparalleled heroes; others—villains, scoundrels, murderers, cannibals” (“В голод люди показали себя, показали себя, освободившись от всякого рода мишуры: одни оказались замечательными, не имеющее аналогов герои, другие-злодеями, мерзавцами, убийцами, людоедами“).<sup>15</sup> Simply put, “there was no middle ground” (“не было никакого второго плана”).<sup>16</sup> While the extremities of siege living did polarize an individual’s disposition, the accrued experiential transfigurations in varied social networks – familial, kin, community – can still be analyzed. Even in the most desperate of situations, families and kin networks did not fully break down. It is still

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<sup>12</sup> Simmons, “Leningrad Culture under Siege,” 165.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>15</sup> Dmitrii Likhachev, “Kak my ostalis’ zhivy,” *Neva* 1 (1991), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Likhachev, “Kak my ostalis’ zhivy,” 21.

possible to see the blockade years as transformative even given “the extremes of personality” that were manifested because of siege life.

Siege diaries provide the evidentiary foundation for this study. Rather than concentrating on a top-down analysis, supported largely by government reports and correspondence, this thesis uses individual diaries and memories to analyze how Leningraders reinterpreted and renegotiated their interpersonal relationships and social structures. Diaries and memories present their own unique challenges for the historian. Firstly, in Soviet sources there are issues of government censorship after the war. Thus, many of these sources were published abroad or were kept private until the collapse of Soviet power in 1991 and those that were published through the Soviet press were gutted of any direct or indirect reference to subjects that countered Leningrad’s official narrative (one in which starvation and suffering were silenced). Additionally, diarists have a natural inclination to sanitize unflattering descriptions of family members and loved ones.

From the outset there is a paucity of personal accounts and diaries penned by men. Thus, while several sources offer a male perspective, this analysis is skewed towards the female perspective of siege life, into a gendered interpretation of the blockade.<sup>17</sup> Historians Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina argue that women are integral to the study of siege history and their combined cultural output during the siege – from poetry and prose to radio broadcasting – “served as a lifeline among the city’s

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<sup>17</sup>The iconic image of the blockade, what Tatiana Maksimova entitled, the “emblem of hunger” (Эмблема голода) was the image produced by V.S. Orolov and had two women at the heart of the painting. Makisovma described his visual creations: “the endless vista of weary, muffled women and girls, dragging corpses in silent streets on sheets of plywood or a sled in their last journey, to what was the nearest mortuary, where the dead were brought into mass graves (Он воспроизводил бесконечную вереницу измученных, закутанных женщин и девушек, волочивших близких по безмолвным улицам на листах фанеры или санках в их последний путь, каковым был ближайший морг, откуда покойников свозили в братские могилы.) – 35. Orolov’s image is more than representative of the gendered perspective of siege life and survival. It in fact became the perennial visual illustration for the city’s descent into war and starvation.

inhabitants.”<sup>18</sup> Simmons and Perlina also offer the first gendered reading and analysis of the siege years, and “confront [...] gender as a defining issues of the Siege experience.”<sup>19</sup>

The second chapter will discuss the deterioration of social relationships during the pre-war period, highlighting how official ideology fostered an environment in which the family became the dominant and safest form of social connection. The development of siege taboos will tie into the re-extension of these formerly defunct private and public relationships, as Leningraders were forced to craft social mechanisms that dictated public life. The third chapter will focus on the domestic setting, in particular the family, demonstrating how the weathering of the family unit during the pre-war period provided a test-run for the blockade, as families became increasingly more elastic and better able to handle trauma. The fourth chapter will focus on the public arena, specifically the main site of social interaction the bread queue. As the authority of the government diminished, Leningraders began to craft and formulate social constraints and norms that dictated how they interacted with each other.

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<sup>18</sup> Cynthia Simmons and Nina Perlina, *Writing the Siege of Leningrad* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), xxviii.

<sup>19</sup> Simons and Perlina, *Writing the Siege*, xxix.

## CHAPTER TWO SOCIAL STRUCTURES, TABOOS AND FOOD

The 1930s in the Soviet Union was a period of social revolution. Political legislation increasingly had socially corrosive effects: collectivization in the countryside transplanted the template of class-warfare into peasant communities that were previously largely economically undifferentiated; industrialization reformulated the demographic composition of cities, communities and families. The Terror was the most socially destabilizing government policy during the 1930s because, while at first used as a mechanism to purify the party, over time it came to engulf the entire nation. As the state targeted more politically suspect groups—former leftists, rightists, clergy, aristocrats, kulaks, non-Russians—it brought the entire population into its assault because, and as Wendy Z. Goldman notes, “members of each one of these targeted groups were bound to others outside the group by bonds of marriage and kinship.”<sup>20</sup> Thus rather than consisting of honed strikes against specific populations, the Terror “emerges as a far broader and more diffuse phenomenon” affecting the populace regardless of group association or risk factors.<sup>21</sup> At the height of the Terror, the family became the most intimate and safest form of social connection, as increasingly individuals cut ties with non-essential relations out of fear of being betrayed to the state.

Although some fervent party members or public sycophants quickly demonstrated their willingness to jettison familial relations, or even “deliberately sacrifice” a family member in demonstration of their loyalty, many individuals went to great lengths to

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<sup>20</sup> Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 191.

<sup>21</sup> Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, 192.

circumvent public exposure of any “politically problematic relatives.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, while individuals strategically pruned numerous other social relationships during the Terror, the family system was inversely strengthened. The psychological aspects of the Terror, and the “uncertain and dangerous conditions of life,” in the 1930s did reaffirm and strengthen familial ties.<sup>23</sup> By the end of the 1930s many of the social patterns that had existed even at the beginning of the 1930s had been reformulated and typically narrowed to such a degree that family networks provided the majority and by far the safest form of social relationships.<sup>24</sup>

The role of women—central to blockade life in Leningrad in 1941—was publically and privately recast during the 1930s, as state policies extended employment access to women due to industrialization while increasingly restricting their civil rights, position within the household, and economic independence. There is a long trope within Russian history that praises the virtues of the Russian woman (industrious, selfless, family matriarch) and denigrates those of the Russian man as epitomized in the *muzhik* (lazy, perpetually drunk, detached). Between 1917 and 1936 Bolshevik family policy, which was integrally related to women’s rights, underwent a profound transformation. Initially, party policy supported the destruction of the bourgeois family as an oppressive and patriarchal unit of social organization and emphasized the “withering away” of the family as a “commitment to individual freedom.”<sup>25</sup> The June 1936 law effectively eroded

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<sup>22</sup> Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, 195, 182.

<sup>23</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41.

<sup>24</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s,” *Journal of Modern History*, 68 4 (December 1996), 849; Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, 191-198.

<sup>25</sup> Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy*, 337.

the gains of women over the previous two decades, extolling the virtues of maternity intimately associated with pro-natalism.<sup>26</sup>

Siege life, however, necessitated a reformulation of Leningrad's social geography. The re-extension of individual connections into the community and the re-extension of previously severed social networks were coupled with a 'thawing' of NKVD counterrevolutionary activity. While theft, murder, and pro-German sentiment still carried the death penalty, the environment of blockade demanded a liberalization of party policies within the city. Insubordination, desertion, and public dissent were officially tolerated because the authorities could do little, due to the demand of the military, to survey, investigate and prosecute these acts of unrest.<sup>27</sup> Although there was never anything resembling a coherent attack on the Soviet system, as Richard Bitlack points out, "vocal and printed criticism of Soviet power increased during," the last days of August.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout this period of social reconstruction and re-articulation, Leningraders were given more freedom because of the lack of comprehensive government oversight that was restricted because of the war.<sup>29</sup> It was only on 3 March 1942, that the State Defense Committee (*GKO*), the organizational apparatus empowered to coordinate the military defense of the front and the city, adopted a decree that systematically penalized

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<sup>26</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 331. While not overtly anti-female, the June 1936 law circumscribed much of gains women had made over the past two decades, namely the availability of divorce, access to abortions, and family planning literature. This law was a conservative revision of Bolshevism's traditional stance towards marriage and the family in which women's liberation was implicit.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Bitlack, "The Political Mood in Leningrad during the First Year of the Soviet-German War," in *Russian Review*, vol. 59, no. 1 (Jan., 2000), 105.

<sup>28</sup> Bitlack, "The Political Mood in Leningrad," 101.

<sup>29</sup> Boris Belozarov, "Crime during the Siege," in *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-44*, eds. John Barber and Andrei Dzeniskevich (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan Publishers, 2005), 220. It was not simply a matter of the City Committee's lack of manpower. The remaining police force was also affected by the worsening food crisis as Boris Belozarov highlights. Malnutrition typically incapacitated a large portion of the police force that was in a constant struggle with speculators and profiteers.

any individual guilty of theft of military property (which included food). Decree No. 1379 C unilaterally mandated that “those guilty of such wrongdoing must be regarded as enemies of the people.”<sup>30</sup> Although these official measures were only imposed in early March 1942, Leningraders had already created organic social mechanisms to combat theft, particularly at the bread queue. The freedom that Leningraders experienced, coupled with the state’s obvious prioritization of the war effort, fostered an atmosphere in which Leningraders had to craft new and specific social norms largely without the interference of the state. The public, via the reformulation of social networks extending into the community, led and the government followed. In her memoirs Lidiya Ginzburg highlighted the existence of these siege taboos. In the bread queue “the only thing stopping you [from stealing a loaf of bread] was the common convention, the abstract social taboo.”<sup>31</sup> Some of these siege taboos were specific to the dictates of siege life, while others built upon preexisting social proscriptions. Either way, Leningraders were forced to construct some sense of social norms that dictated siege life.

Perhaps the most common trope of social taboo centered on the expansive black market. People frequently supplemented their paltry state rations with food products purchased from speculators on the rampant black market, which developed quickly after the declaration of war, and with particular rapidity with the introduction of the ration system on September 2, 1941.<sup>32</sup> Although there is a lengthy history of widespread black market activity in Russia, speculative activity during the Soviet period was quite acute, particularly for the urban population. Leningraders had previous experience with collusion in black market trading from the Civil War period through the Five Year Plans

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<sup>30</sup> Boris Belozerov, “Crime during the Siege,” 219-221.

<sup>31</sup> Lidiya Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, trans. Alan Myers (London: the Harvill Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>32</sup> Harrison Salisbury, *900 Days: the Siege of Leningrad* (New York: De Capo Press, 1969), 388.

of the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> During the 1930s an extensive network of black market activities was thriving in the urban centers, Leningrad included, benefiting tremendously from the disastrous effects of collectivization and industrialization.

Anna Petrovna had nothing but contempt for speculators for “there is nothing more vile and insidious than those who, preying on the suffering and misfortune, bleeding people, stuff their pockets by means of speculation and stealing. And there are a good number of them.”<sup>34</sup> Official pronouncements against participation in the black market also built upon this trope of social fracture, employing a dichotomy that emphasized the collective versus the individual (the speculator). Dmitri Pavlov, the acting representative of the State Committee for Defense who served as the lead coordinator of Leningrad’s food supply from the outbreak of the war until January 1942, repeatedly publically condemned the actions of “egoists and crooks,” who for the sake of filling their bellies actively participate in the black market, “even if it cost the lives of their nearest and dearest.”<sup>35</sup>

Although speculators received particular condemnation from Leningraders, it is not an issue of abject denunciation by individuals. All individuals were complicit in unregulated trade, whether through the black market or bartering with a neighbor, and rather than complete separation from participation in the black market, it was a matter of degree. With food the sole objective for the entire urban population, and given the scant and ever-diminishing rations administered by the state, countless Leningraders were involved or participated in some manner in the black market. Diaries and memoirs refer

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<sup>33</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 317.

<sup>34</sup> Anna Petrovna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Writing the Siege*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Harrison Salisbury, forward to *Leningrad 1941: the Blockade*, by Dmitri Pavlov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), xiii; Salisbury, *900 Days*, 303.

to some complicity in the black market, driven by hunger.<sup>36</sup> Evegniia Vadimovna Shavrova, in a letter to her husband, stated that, “All our nicer things have been sold or bartered,” presumably to buy food.<sup>37</sup> One woman candidly retold her descent into hunger. “I sold things for food. I sold a grand piano for bread. People sold everything they could.”<sup>38</sup> By necessity - whether driven personally or by meager ration allotments - Leningraders were engaged with the large informal network of black market speculators and profiteers.

Concurrent with a fervent and typically genuine positive public attitude towards the war, there still remained a general distrust of authority. This anti-authority trope was marshaled for criticisms of not only the party but also crops up in siege diaries and memoirs when individuals castigate any hierarchical structure they encounter. This included employees within the entire “food chain,” stretching from the transport network that shuttled food into the city through the ration dispensaries.<sup>39</sup> Food became a social marker; it served as mechanism of difference, between those who ‘suffered’ and those who did not. Throughout the fall of 1941, the Leningrad City Executive Committee (*gorispolkom*) held numerous meetings over the issue of rampant criminal activity within the food distribution system.<sup>40</sup> Employees of “bakeries, cooperatives, soup kitchens, and children’s centers” received particular condemnation amongst Leningraders, chiefly for

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<sup>36</sup> Yura Riabinkin, *Leningrad Under Siege: First-hand Accounts of the Ordeal*, eds. Ales’ Adamovich and Daniil Granin (Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2007), 95.

<sup>37</sup> Evegniia Vadimovna Shavrova, *Writing the Siege*, 42.

<sup>38</sup> William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: the Food Supply in the USSR During WWII* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 195. Moskoff cites this woman at length but upon consultation of the footnote the only bibliographic information that is given is an interview that was presumably conducted by the author, in October 28, 1986.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Bitlack and Nikita Lomagin, “The Struggle to Survive: the Dying City,” *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 309.

<sup>40</sup> Belozarov, “Crime during the Siege,” 214, 218.

their rampant proclivity to “cheat the unfortunate inhabitants,” hiding “the best food amongst themselves.”<sup>41</sup> Officially, it was extremely difficult for authorities to track down and prosecute individuals who were intimately involved in speculation, racketeering or theft. Criminality within the food distribution system was so rife, that by late December, 3,500 komsomol members were designated with the task of ensuring that “honest” people staffed food distribution centers.<sup>42</sup> By October of 1942, city authorities had reclaimed over 483 metric tons of stolen food that workers in the food networks had pilfered.<sup>43</sup> The wider public was also well aware of the differential access to food that employees in food industries had.

Upon a spring 1942 visit to the local bathhouse, “the large number of well-fed Rubenesque young women with radiant bodies and glowing physiognomies” flabbergasted Anastasia Osipovna.<sup>44</sup> She immediately connected these women’s healthy physiques with privileged access to food, identifying them as workers in the food distribution system. “Everything gets lost in the ‘apparatus,’” she laconically noted.<sup>45</sup> For Leningraders, the collective critique of employees of the food distribution system did not crystallize around access per se, but was rather a honed critique of the individual who harmed the community versus the collective as a whole.

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<sup>41</sup> Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Writing the Siege*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Moskoff, *the Bread of Affliction*, 194-195.

<sup>43</sup> “Report from Kubatkin to the *gorkom* on the number of people arrested, convicted, and exiled during the war, 1 October, 1942,” *The Leningrad Blockade, 1941-1944: A New Documentary History from the Soviet Archives*, eds. Richard Bitlack and Nikita Lomagin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 257

<sup>44</sup> Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Writing the Siege*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

Olga Berggolts described a similar bathhouse scene, in which all the female bathers had “dark bodies with raw skin,” shrunken breasts, and collapsed bellies.<sup>46</sup> But, then a healthy woman entered, who had “firm, round, pert breasts with cheeky pink nipples [and]...milky skin.”<sup>47</sup> Berggolts was appalled not because of her salubrious physique, but because of what the woman’s “normal, blooming health and eternally feminine flesh” represented—she was removed from the collective suffering of the city’s population and stood apart as a reminder of hierarchical difference. In her diary, Berggolts lambasted this woman and what she represented: “how dare she come like this into this terrible building, where the monstrous humiliation and horrors of the war were displayed, how dare she, the bitch, how dare she insult all that with her lovely, healthy body?...—she must have been sleeping with the manager of a restaurant!”<sup>48</sup> Berggolts and the other women at the bathhouse “avoided her, recoiled from her,” because the woman survived and remained unnaturally healthy through her manipulation of the food distribution system at the expense of the community.<sup>49</sup> Berggolts directly correlated the woman’s healthy body with the population’s collective starvation. She wrote, that “she has been robbing *us* and *our* children [emphasis added].”<sup>50</sup> Rather than couch her disgust with the woman in personal terms, Berggolts employed shared pronouns demonstrating that, for her, “the bitch” had broken her association with the community and directly violated siege taboos.<sup>51</sup> Rapid mobilization and the exigencies of war removed many of the bureaucratic mechanisms that existed to curtail criminal activity within the food

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<sup>46</sup> As quoted in Marius Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and Their War*, trans. Rosalind Buck (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 78-79.

<sup>47</sup> As quoted in Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and Their War*, 79.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

network. Elena Skrjabina commented on the proliferation of corrupt practices that were rife amongst employees in the food network: “Everyone who has power or is in a position to deal with foodstuffs, uses his privileged place to the utmost.”<sup>52</sup> Unconstrained, theft became widespread amongst employees within the food distribution network. But it was not only in public that this contrast of access played out.<sup>53</sup>

Developments in the private sphere mirrored those in public. Within domestic space, access to food linked to differential affiliations or financial standing, not to location and propinquity as in the public setting. Yura, a boy of sixteen, frequently remarked in his diary about the contrast between the starving and the “well-fed people.”<sup>54</sup> If it were not for the common sight of nourished people, and the smells of “bread, pancakes and porridge,” coming from next door Yuri admitted, “I am absolutely sure that I would have got use to all this [chronic hunger] by now.”<sup>55</sup> What truly was the most offensive, the “absolutely worst thing,” for Yura was his proximity to such difference: “here I am, living in hunger, in cold, amongst fleas, while there is a room next door where life is completely different, where there is always bread, porridge, meat, sweets, warmth, a bright Estonian oil lamp, comfort.”<sup>56</sup> While differential access to food was present in both the public and private settings, it does not demonstrate the deterioration of social relationships. Rather, it highlights that individuals crafted a specific code of

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<sup>52</sup> Elena Skrjabina. *Siege and Survival: the Odyssey of a Leningrader*, trans. Norman Luxenburg (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971) 53-54.

<sup>53</sup> All primary and secondary sources make countless reference to criminality associated with employees of the food distribution system. Suspicion was based on cold, hard facts. This “suspicion” becomes apparent when one begins to look at the survival rates of employees in food factories. Bitlack and Lomagin employ survival statistics at the Krupskaia candy factory as representative of the gross imbalance of starvation rates between Leningraders and those employed within the food distribution system. Of the 713 people employed in the factory at the start of the winter of 1941, none starved to death. Bitlack and Lomagin, “The Struggle to Survive,” 289; Salisbury, *900 Days*, 120, 132-133, 160; Boris Belozzerov, “Crime during the Siege,” in *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-44*, 214, 218.

<sup>54</sup> Riabinkin, *Leningrad Under Siege*, 102.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

difference that was based around access to food. Furthermore, it was the disconnect between individual self-preservation, represented by employees with access to food, and the collective suffering of the city's population, forced to stand in the bread queue or barter away their possessions, that honed a narrative of communal difference.

While the creation of siege taboos was premised largely on access to food and equality of that access, former social proscriptions continued in force. In fact, criminality, rather than seen as crime committed against the state, was now seen as a crime against the collective. Driven by hunger, thousands of people committed crimes, particularly teenagers.<sup>57</sup> Sof'ia Nikolaevna Buriakova recounted the violation of this social contract, when a youth snatched a loaf of bread from an elderly woman on the street. Led only by the thought of food, the boy “quickly shoved it into his mouth, and then fell onto the floor with his face to ground and started to chew it feverishly.”<sup>58</sup> The surrounding bystanders immediately began to assault him, but “not matter how much they hit and kicked him...he chewed and swallowed it all.”<sup>59</sup> Buriakova sadly remarked that her eyewitness account was representative of an all-to-common occurrence on the city's streets.

The siege environment provided an atmosphere in which there was a sense of liberation amongst the population. Although Stalin's repressionist tactics continued throughout the war, a circumstance described by Leningrader Dmitrii Likhachev as being surrounded “by a double ring—internally and externally,” the insular environment that the blockade created proved to be freeing to the city's populace (по двойным кольцом-

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<sup>57</sup> “Portion of the memoir of Nikolai Sergeev, head of the raw materials section of the Sausage Factory, during the winter of 1941-42,” *The Leningrad Blockade*, 289-90; Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 45. This is an interesting point because the rationing system contributes to this age demographic unbalanced participation in criminality. Dependents, whether two or seventeen, were allotted the same caloric portions even though biologically adolescents need a caloric diet equivalent to an adult's.

<sup>58</sup> Sof'ia Nikolaevna Buriakova, *Writing the Siege*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

внутренне и внешне).<sup>60</sup> Ginzburg touched upon the transformation in daily routine, as time gained a new, freeing meaning. “Getting up was easy, easier than in the former life, when fried eggs were waiting and didn’t need thinking about. The transition was simpler now as well. People slept almost without undressing; it was enough just to stick your legs quickly into the boots which stood by the bed.”<sup>61</sup> The importance of hunger dominated and drove life. It was the internal reorganization, oriented solely around food, that made life, and thus time, simpler. Svetlana Magayeva, a child of nine during the first year of the siege, remembered gaining “freedom that we had never before experienced,” as adults worked during the day, and the children were left to the care of “old grannies and... older men.”<sup>62</sup> Due to a variety of reasons, Leningraders were partially liberated by the siege environment. In addition to “freedom from daily chores and the clock,” there was a concurrent liberalization pertaining to social and political freedoms.<sup>63</sup> Leningraders were much more willing to “commit their political views to paper,” marshaling private and public critiques of the Soviet system.<sup>64</sup>

A day after Moscow instituted a rationing system Leningrad issued its own rationing system, implemented on July 18, 1941. Leningrad’s location directly affected the management of the local food economy, for as the Germans sped towards the city, all production was shifted toward pumping out war materiel, most of it bound for Moscow. As local productive capacity diminished production of domestic goods that were vital for survival was minimized. As historian Richard Bitlack notes, “the more small stoves,

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<sup>60</sup> Likhachev, “Kak my ostalis’ zhivy,” 28.

<sup>61</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Svetlanan Magayeva and Albert Pleysier, *Surviving the Blockade of Leningrad*, trans. Alexey Vinogradov (Lanham and Oxford: University Press of American, Inc., 2006), 42.

<sup>63</sup> Simmons, “Leningrad Culture under Siege,” 170.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

firewood, warm clothes, and insulation that there were, the less people would suffer. Yet enterprises serving the civilian population were the first to be shut down or converted to production for war materiel.”<sup>65</sup> This was not Leningrad’s first experience with food rationing. Beginning with WWI, the city’s inhabitants saw several manifestations of a rationing system, with the last widespread implementation ending in 1935.<sup>66</sup> Skrjabina, writing in reaction to the recent expansion of food stores recalled Leningraders past relationship with food rationing: “We can remember the years before the “New Economic Policy,” when the most delectable course of fare in Leningrad was horsemeat fried in castor oil, and the famine of ’33 when entire villages died in the Ukraine.”<sup>67</sup> The survival of another family was predicated on the patriarch’s earlier experience in wartime Petrograd. Dmitrii Likhachev praised his father’s prior experience with starvation in 1918-19, an “experience [that]...served him well” (Дома он колол дрова на блоке для нашей печи - его опыт более раннего голода 1918-19 в Петрограде сослужила ему хорошую службу.)<sup>68</sup>

The *gorispolkom* instituted the first round of food rationing in late July. Elena Skrjabina noted the beginning restrictions in her entry of July 18: “this is not so bad. One can live on this.” Between early September and the end of November, rations were cut six times. By late November the final allotment for a *rabochii* was 250 grams (a

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Bitlack, *Workers at War: Factory Workers and Labor Policy in the Siege of Leningrad*, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and Eastern European Studies, no. 902 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Russian and Eastern European Center, 1991), 18. The statistics Bitlack marshals is astounding. Upon the outbreak of war in June, only 6.2 percent of Leningrad’s local economy was geared to defense production. By the end of 1941 it had risen to 77 percent. Bitlack does acknowledge that the war between Germany and the Soviet Union can easily be described as “total” war. Thus all available machine and manpower was funneled into military production at the expense of domestic consumption (i.e. food, clothing, fuel).

<sup>66</sup> Bitlack, *Workers at War*, 4-5. Over the decades, Leningraders had managed to become accustomed to chronic food shortages that spanned the Romanov-Bolshevik period. The implementation of a ration system in 1915 was the first in a series of forced government food cutbacks in the wake of the Revolution, the subsequent civil war, and most recently with failed collectivization in the early 1930s.

<sup>67</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Dmitrii Likhachev, *Vospominaniya* (St. Petersburg: Logos, 1995), 229.

reduction of 550 grams). For everyone else it was a meager 125 grams (on average a reduction of 450 grams).<sup>69</sup> By late autumn of 1941, the procurement of food quickly became the one activity that increasingly dominated Leningraders' lives. The domestic setting became increasingly important as winter approached.

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<sup>69</sup> Bitlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 262-264, 266-268, 413; Salisbury, *900 Days*, 388.

### CHAPTER THREE FOOD IN THE APARTMENT

The most intimate site of social interaction was based around the family unit. In the Soviet case, this typically did not consist solely of a nuclear family but included a wide swath of extended family members. The family structure that was normalized during the 1930s – a breadwinning mother, a handful of children, and several extended family members, most notably “the irreplaceable *babushka*... who ran the household” – continued during the siege period.<sup>70</sup> The absence of men during the 1930s was attributable to the rapidity and scale of state modernization drives; during the war the absence of men was attributable to rapid mobilization. With the father off at the front, the woman became the primary wage earner “making every sacrifice imaginable to keep the children alive.”<sup>71</sup> Svetlana Magayeva’s mother secretly returned portions of the bread given to her by Svetlana, even if it caused her health to diminish: “I was trying to give her pieces of my bread, but when I was not looking she would return my pieces and add to them some of her own portion.”<sup>72</sup> Parents, and mothers in particular, sacrificed all.

During the struggle for food family members and fictive kin networks became vital. Fictive kin implies a close relationship, beyond acquaintance, that resembled family ties but was not based on blood. Svetlana Magayeva’s relationship with her “adopted grandmother,” a woman who only recently was incorporated into the family system (given the lack of any maternal or paternal elders), was representative.<sup>73</sup> In the early months of the war, Svetlana’s grandmother was killed in an aerial assault. Maria, an

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<sup>70</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 139-143.

<sup>71</sup> Bitlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 274.

<sup>72</sup> Magayeva and Pleysier, *Surviving the Blockade*, 66.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 52, 74, 80.

elderly neighbor, volunteered: “Would you like for me to be your grandmother?”<sup>74</sup> The next day, Maria brought gifts over to Svetlana’s apartment, many of which were valuable food items.<sup>75</sup> Until her death in early January 1942, Maria frequently provided an essential lifeline for both Svetlana and her mother, gifting them with food on numerous occasions. These relationships included co-workers, lifelong friends, and neighbors. Leningraders were willing to go to great lengths to ensure the survival of not only familial relations, but also neighbors and fictive kin. Lidiya Ginzburg adroitly summed up these relationships: “Wrung with pity or cursing, people shared their bread. Cursing they shared it, and sharing, they died.”<sup>76</sup> Although individuals prized the bread ration that received, they still went to great lengths to assist close friends in need. It was a combination of self-control and “shining charity,” that through denying oneself food others were able to survive.<sup>77</sup>

There is an inherent trust implicit within the “siege mentality” that Ginzburg so often mentioned. This trust is based around the procurement of food, including the safe transportation and successful arrival at home. Countless memoirs mention the need for self-imposed regulations regarding when one could begin consumption of rations and the perspective pitfalls – that could prove fatal – if one refused to comply with the ethos of siege life. This inherent trust—the vital reliance of dependents<sup>78</sup> upon primary care/food winners—characterized the fragility of siege life but also demonstrates re-extension of

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<sup>74</sup> Magayeva and Pleysier, *Surviving the Blockade*, 52.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>76</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 7-8.

<sup>77</sup> Anna Reid, *Leningrad: the Epic Siege of World War II, 1941-1944* (New York: Walker & Company, 2011), 237.

<sup>78</sup> It is important to note that the usage of this designator is problematized by the fact that individuals that fall into this category were not simply familial dependents. Countless families throughout the city took into orphans. Orphans could have some sort of kin based connection, say a niece or an elderly uncle, but many were also simply children who were abandoned by their parents or were orphaned by bombardment or starvation.

relationship ties under siege life. Breadwinners (no pun intended) were literally the lifelines between the ration system and their families/dependents back home. And as mentioned above, the ‘breadwinner’ was not always the mother or the father. Children and grandparents were increasingly tasked with the responsibility to collect the family’s allotted rations. Lidochka Karasyova’s grandmother “would leave early in the morning when it was still dark,” to collect the daily rations for their family. At other times, she would depart at dusk and wait patiently in the bread queue “throughout the night to receive the family allotments the following morning.”<sup>79</sup> The strength of family systems, hardened by weathering the socially eroding nature of the Terror, allowed responsibilities, previously held by the mother and/or to the father, to be disaggregated and spread amongst members of the family unit.

It became a personal mantra that one “should never start on it [bread]” for once one had a tiny bite their fortitude would implode, not because of personal lack of character but because of the primal urge for nourishment. Elena Skrjabina’s husband, a military personal stationed at a city hospital, would daily save the breakfast he received at work, a “cup of watery porridge,” for their son. Skrjabina proudly writes, “but he doesn’t eat it. He brings it home for Yura. He has one care—to help whom he can.”<sup>80</sup> On a personal level, individual members of the family tried their best to create unique ways to spread out their consumption of their ration throughout the day. Skrjabina’s mother adopted a method of frugality, trying “to stretch her piece into three meals.”<sup>81</sup> Elena Skrjabina noted that upon returning home with the rations, the family implemented a

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<sup>79</sup> Magayeva and Pleysier, *Surviving the Blockade*, 106-107.

<sup>80</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 32.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

unified and egalitarian strategy. “We had started dividing the bread equally among us. Everyone wants to use his portion in his own way.”<sup>82</sup>

At times, the family system was less than harmonious, but the battering that the institution had received during the pre-war period conditioned the family unit to be extremely elastic and adaptive. The continuation of strong family ties, even in times of spousal abuse, death, or dearth, evinced the durability of familial ties, particularly in their ability to weather trauma (first under the Terror and then during the siege). The animalistic necessities of survival profoundly challenged and tested these relationships, but throughout they remained resilient.

The management of food within the family in some cases led to gender role reversal as fights over control and access of food stretched family bonds to their limits without breaking. Irina, a neighbor of Elena Skrjabina, was transformed from a reserved and polite woman, into a husband-beater. All Irina’s husband did was wait for food, “he wants to eat all the time and can never get enough.”<sup>83</sup> When she returned from the rationing station or the bread queue, he would “throw himself on the food” without any regard for her survival.<sup>84</sup> Food had turned him into an animal with no awareness of those around him, even his wife. In a desperate attempt to protect her rations and thus her life, Irina, had to beat the “husband whom she always adored.”<sup>85</sup> In an entry in early spring of 1942, Lidiya Ginzburg simply writes, “Swearing at the Fritzes” again.<sup>86</sup> The couple constantly fought over food and how to go about distributing their rations amongst the

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<sup>82</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 30. Personally, Skrjabina drank coffee daily (procured in bulk before the war) in an effort to spread her bread rations out and substitute edible calories for liquid calories.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>86</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 50.

family. Although dearth pushed family systems to their limits, it was much more advantageous to endure the siege as a cohesive unit. Membership within a family unit allowed for the disaggregation of daily chores and responsibilities. In times of crisis, individuals employed a variety of strategies to cope with the absence of food and its corrosive effects on family bonds. Irina was forced to beat her husband; the Fritzes fought incessantly, but throughout familial relationships endured.

The apartment and the family system that came to include extended family and fictive kin were also the site of gendered reactions to food and the interrelationship of family members. Elena Skrjabina's lengthy description of her neighbor Irina's devolution into spousal abuse highlights one aspect of gender in the domestic sphere. While Irina spent hours in line at the overcrowded bread queue, her husband *waited*. Unemployed, he sat at home in anticipation of his wife's return, ready to pounce on the food she was carrying. Skrjabina, in defense of Irina, writes: "Of course, she is hungry herself. But it is hard for a starving *man* to leave even one little piece."<sup>87</sup> Skrjabina's use of the word *man* is illuminating. Her usage of this word is specifically masculine. Again, the women's domination of siege life characterized their relationship with men.<sup>88</sup> Increasingly, men fell away and women, by necessity, were forced to fill their roles in a variety of sectors including the apartment. Skrjabina mentions having to take over the responsibilities of the apartment's janitor who was incapacitated for a long time. In fact, Skrjabina

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<sup>87</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 32. Emphasis added.

<sup>88</sup> In Russian, the use of the word 'man' is not commensurate with the English usage of 'man.' If Skrjabina was not deliberately generalizing about men and their overwhelmingly selfish relationship with food, she would have used the word 'person' in Russian providing a neutral categorization.

comments, “men are generally disabled; many of them have already taken to their beds, weak from hunger.”<sup>89</sup>

The mentality of survival lingered even after a loved one had died. The ration card system was the lifeline of the city’s population, but due to party’s lack of preparedness and chronic malfeasance, food stores continued to dwindle and it was nearly impossible to survive entirely off of government rations. For many, as William Moskoff argues, the ration card was “the last gift that the dead could give their loved ones,” although officially it was illegal to pass along ration cards. It soon became common place for a family to “hide bodies of relatives,” all in an effort to secure more food and “illegally use their ration cards until new cards were issued.”<sup>90</sup> City officials were ultimately forced to adapt the policy because so many people continued to hold onto and use the ration cards of their loved ones. Elena Skrjabina noted that in the hours after death took someone in her apartment complex, “the big concern” was the ration card.<sup>91</sup> This “concern” was not largely centered on food consumption; instead it provided an avenue for families to bury loved ones. Given that money and all but a few high demand products, particularly alcohol, had lost all worth, bread was the only thing that could ensure a proper burial for a family member. Skrjabina tersely commented, “no one will dig a grave for money.”<sup>92</sup> This is an intriguing amendment to the typical portrayal of familial relations stashing bodies *solely* for food purposes. Although people “resort[ed] to various tricks to prolong their own lives,” the perpetuation of ration cards was also in an

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<sup>89</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege of Survival*, 34.

<sup>90</sup> Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction*, 195.

<sup>91</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 59.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

effort to provide a loved one with a proper burial. It was the last chance to show their love.<sup>93</sup>

The possibility of inheriting a ration card at times produced tragic results. The ration card was an individual's assurance at a chance of survival. Even though the *gorispolkom* instituted monthly issuing of ration cards in an attempt to curb theft and counterfeiting, Leningraders still went to great lengths, including murder, to get their hands on any extra avenue to food. Sofia Nikolaevna Buriakova, a housewife of an accountant, recalls her brother's death at the hands of his neighbors. They brutally murdered him "for an extra six hundred grams of bread." To cover up the bloody scene, her brother's neighbors refused her entry and claimed to have buried his body.<sup>94</sup> Familial bonds were not the only social relationships utilized by Leningraders as a strategy of survival. Fictive kin associations – largely formed by neighbors, close co-workers, or even former students – repeatedly provided vital food at times of immediate or prolonged crisis during the blockade. Neighbors, due to their proximity, formed the most immediate fictive kin relationship with families and individual family members.

By early August, Elena Skrjabina, a young member of the intelligentsia, was worried about the fate of her boys. She needed reassurance from a friend. Upon mentioning her fears to neighbor, Skrjabina was reassured about her children's fate because of the extensive network of fictive kin that she possessed: "if something like that happens, you know you will have hundreds of friends here in Leningrad. Your children will be quite safe."<sup>95</sup> If Elena were to die of starvation, she could be reassured that her two young boys would be cared for and loved. After the tribulations of the starvation

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<sup>93</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 60.

<sup>94</sup> Buriakova, *Writing the Siege*, 99.

<sup>95</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 16.

winter, Evgeniia Shavrova, in a letter to her husband, an officer in the armed forces, details the descent into hunger and the source of their survival. “A short history of our life lately goes like this: From December to January we ate thanks to the Klausens (our acquaintances).”<sup>96</sup> Shavrova gives no further details but this passage demonstrates the ability of even “acquaintances” to provide assistance, strengthening pre-existing relationship networks.

Another key component of the survival of kin networks were those who acted as an intermediary between two different parties, typically transporting goods from less-affected regions into the city proper. There appears to be an implicit trust amongst family systems, extending to those who acted as representatives of kin. One woman, for example, demonstrated the inherent trust that was placed on familial relationships, particularly in procuring food. After reaching her breaking point (she was also acting as the guardian for her aging father), consuming “ten to fifteen glasses of water” to fake the feeling of satiety, a man arrived at her apartment, “who was sent by my mother and sister (who had been evacuated). He brought four potatoes and two pieces of chocolate.”<sup>97</sup> It is remarkable that a stranger, even if connected through familial acquaintance, went out of his way to deliver the gift given by the woman’s mother and sister. Rather than simply consume the food himself or sell it, the man felt compelled to carry his delivery to fruition.

Closely related to these relational intermediaries were individuals who either had some connection with the family or by chance repeatedly returned to trade, barter or give goods. Elena Skriabina makes several diary notations about a man, whom she only

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<sup>96</sup> Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Writing the Siege*, 32.

<sup>97</sup> Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction*, 195-196.

designates as “the Tartar,” who showed up several times at her door with goods to trade.<sup>98</sup> Even though this man was a complete stranger, Skrjabina acknowledged his grounding presence. Because of “the Tartar,” she wrote, “I will be able to give the children at least a small piece [of bread] everyday.”<sup>99</sup> The appearance of a stranger was no longer marked by the late pre-war characterizations of a betrayer, turncoat, or whisperer. Rather, these random interactions gave people immediate hope. Kyra Petrovskaya, a nineteen-year-old nurse, noted these non-governmental human interactions, based around food, which served as a caloric lifeline. Upon taking up a nursing position at a military hospital, Petrovskaya detailed the evolution of a friendship with Valya, a “powerful peasant girl who could easily lift a grown man.”<sup>100</sup> She served as a *druzhinniza*, a front-line nurse. Valya smuggled any food she could - meat, “half-melted bars of chocolate,” sugar, or “a few raw potatoes” – into the city for Petrovskaya, and weekly she looked for her.<sup>101</sup> Petrovskaya, on a day when she needed more food than was sanctioned wrote, “Today, more than ever...I needed her gifts.”<sup>102</sup> Even the most casual of contacts could prove vital and life sustaining for an individual or a family. In fact, for Petrovskaya, the frequent visits from Valya were essential, for when Valya did not show up, Petrovskaya had to reformulate her strategy for food.

As numerous historians have argued, during the siege there was a reversion towards identities based around “narrower subcultures.” Public and private declarations shifted away from self-identification as a “Soviet” citizen and were instead characterized

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<sup>98</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 30.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>100</sup> Kyra Petrovskaya Wayne, *Shurik: a Story of the Siege of Leningrad* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970), 14.

<sup>101</sup> Wayne, *Shurik*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

by differentiation based upon religion, profession, gender or ethnicity.<sup>103</sup> There was a complete shift, brought about by the war and the inefficiencies of the party, from a macro identification based upon the larger Soviet system to more intimate markers of identity. This shift mirrored the concomitant social reversion to the family, the apartment building and the kin networks. Social reconstructions and rearrangements altered individual and group identification. Rather than maintain a pre-war emphasis on the state, individuals began to primarily identify with smaller, more intimate markers of identity. This is not to say that throughout the war there was no genuine public and widespread support for the Soviet war effort, which was largely couched in terms of Great Russian nationalism. Leningraders enlisted in droves and continued to support the war cause throughout the duration of the blockade. But there was a shift away from primary identification with the Soviet state, towards more narrow and localized identities.

The reformulation of social relationships within the apartment complex was centered on the elasticity of the family system and its' ability to weather trauma. Furthermore, the cultivation of networks of fictive kin and neighbors provided an essential component of survival for the city's population. Indeed, every survivor of the blockade "had a savior," an individual, known or unknown, that supplied food in a vital time of need.<sup>104</sup> But it was not only in the domestic setting that there was a re-extension and reformulation of social relationships. In the public sphere, individuals were drawn into interaction with an extended and revitalized network of community. It was at nodes of food distribution that Leningraders were forced to create organic and collective attempts to self-regulate community members.

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<sup>103</sup> Simmons, "Leningrad Culture under Siege," 168-169.

<sup>104</sup> Ales' Adamovich and Daniil Granin. *A Book of the Blockade*. Translated by Hilda Perham (Moscow: Raduga, 1983), 419.

## CHAPTER FOUR FOOD ON THE STREET: THE BREAD QUEUE AND SOCIABILITY

Unlike the solidification of social relationships that were crafted around family and fictive kin, the reformulation of social connections in the public space was not based on intimate associations (i.e. neighbor, aunt), but the collective and the role of the individual within the larger community matrix. The bread queue is perhaps the most ubiquitous site in which people interacted with the government. Whole days could be dominated by standing in line for meager rations. Yevgeniya Vasyutina recalled standing in line “from ten in the morning to three in the afternoon” without receiving any bread.<sup>105</sup> Throughout the fall it became increasingly common to stand in line and not receive any amount of food.

It is remarkable that in the initial weeks after the German invasion the *gorispolkom* exhausted time and funds on expanding purchase access to “special commercial stores” that were “full of foodstuffs.”<sup>106</sup> Store prices went unregulated and only those with abundant finances were able to patronize these sanctioned stores. Elena Skrjabina remarked that, “people walk in, look at the prices and leave, empty-handed.”<sup>107</sup> Throughout the fall, semi-private food shops continued to operate. Although the city party sanctioned store operations they had little control over pricing. Rampant speculation was common amongst food vendors, as those who had money (or valuables) were forced to spend more and more of their finances on increasingly diminishing portions.

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<sup>105</sup> Salisbury, *900 Days*, 322.

<sup>106</sup> Skrjabina, *Siege and Survival*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

There is a division in primary sources over the extent to which Leningraders maintained non-familial relationships during the siege, particularly during the winter of 1941-42. Some writers presented a winter siegescape devoid of any human interaction. “Every possible relationship,” writes Lidiya Ginzburg, “comradeship, discipleship, friendship, love – fell away like leaves,” and only “one remained in force,” – food.<sup>108</sup> Others, such as Anna Likhacheva have given a much more nuanced understanding of the continuation of relationships – familial, fictive, and public – during the siege winter. When friends gathered they would talk of only food, sharing “memories of dishes that one loved or disliked.” People still gathered, even during the ‘starvation winter,’ and “wherever two or three people meet, at work, at the office, in line, the talk is only of food.”<sup>109</sup> Leningraders were increasingly forced to interact because “the matter of obtaining food,” as Ginzburg observed, which “naturally requires utterances of a communicative nature.” Furthermore, these interpersonal communications were a façade. Cordial and causal remarks and inquiries to an adjacent queuer were an attempt at concealment. “The practical effect of remarks like these [Who’s the last in queue? Which coupon? Have they got ‘Southern’ sweets today?] is to conceal the discharge of irritation, impatience, all the accumulated emotions.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, in some aspect the queue provided a communal (albeit dismal) common ground for Leningraders to have some social interaction even it was undergirded by rampant frustration. Human interaction was energizing.

There was an implicit collusion amongst Leningraders, between those who purchased food at such high prices and the “well-organized system of

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<sup>108</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 7-8.

<sup>109</sup> Anna Ivanova Likhacheva, *Writing the Siege*, 58.

<sup>110</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 42.

undernourishment.”<sup>111</sup> The rationing-system was based upon the dual principles of hierarchy and necessity. It was near impossible to survive of off state rations alone. The *gorispolkom* adopted Lenin’s stance on the political rationalization of food distribution. It was not simply a “matter of distributing it [food] fairly,” but crafting a specific calculus that regarded food “as a method, an instrument, a means for increasing production.”<sup>112</sup> Production was paramount and the ration system reflected this inequitable distribution of food resources.

As head of the food distribution system, Dmitri Pavlov was intimately concerned, and kept himself updated, on the political climate of queue lines. Throughout his tenure, he repeatedly cited the efforts of “factory workers, collective farmers, office workers, and housewives” to “combat speculators” and thieves within the “machinery” of the food distribution network.<sup>113</sup> It was their efforts by-and-large, not those of the state’s, that cut-down on rampant theft within the queue line. Furthermore, government ineptitude and corruption “undermined” the populace’s faith in the governing ability of the *gorispolkom*. and forced Leningraders to collectively organize without the oversight of the state.<sup>114</sup> The community coalesced to not only combat theft and speculation, but also the perceived inequality that rationing stations came to represent.

In fact, Ginzburg, speaks of a social contract in which individuals who shop at these stores, in which “you get your ration without having to queue, no bother at all,” have broken with their fellow community members. Their “irrational” actions were

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<sup>111</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 37.

<sup>112</sup> Dmitri Pavlov, *Leningrad 1941: the Blockade*, trans. John Clinton Adams (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 66.

<sup>113</sup> Dmitri Pavlov, *Leningrad 1941*, 69.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

considered “taboo.”<sup>115</sup> It was precisely because these individuals had the means to purchase goods at an inflated price, and thus set themselves apart from the city’s population at large, that they were identified as breakers of the social norm. The bread queue was a site of social relationships because of the sheer fact of what a queue represented. As Lidiya Ginzburg noted: “a queue is an assembly of people, doomed to a compulsory idle and internally isolated communality.”<sup>116</sup> In public spaces, the reformulation of social networks was an organic response to the necessities of siege life. Ginzburg intimately discussed the creation and solidification of blockade taboos, particularly in relation to communal gathering stations such as the rationing store or the bread queue. Queuing for bread ate hours of one’s day, and could typically be a day wasted. The common purpose of those waiting in line engendered a “mixture of rivalry, hostility, and collective feeling,” remarked Ginzburg. All this energy – both passive and active – became focused on “the common enemy—the law-breaker.”<sup>117</sup> In the absence of an extensive police apparatus, Leningraders were forced to take the law into their own hands. Collectively individuals in line for rations would close ranks against anyone who attempted to skirt the system.

The existence of this taboo was not only an external matter to be dealt with, but it was also an inner conflict between communality and self-preservation. Causal conversations were held throughout the bread queue, but silence was quickly achieved once one was “in front of the scales.”<sup>118</sup> Bread rations produced scraps that then supplemented differing ration amounts. Ginzburg, wanting to reach out and grab the

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<sup>115</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 37.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

tiniest scrap, knew that it was prohibited (if not officially from the state, then socially as a taboo). “The entire social mechanism guards these morsels from the outstretched human hand. Nothing more lies between them – no lock, no police, no queue. Just the immense abstraction of social prohibition.”<sup>119</sup> The emergence of these siege taboos and then their widespread adoption amongst the population, demonstrates a transformation between the pre-war Stalinist social structures in which individuals colluded with the state (not amongst each other) to maintain order. Thus, a year before, a Leningrader would have gone to the NKVD for justice. But the blockade forced a renegotiation between Leningraders in terms of where authority was placed. There was never any legitimate internal threat to the city government, but given that there was a minor vacuum in authority, Leningraders were forced to adhere communally to social prohibitions.

The social contract that was created amongst Leningraders targeted ration stations and their employees, viewing them as representative of the betrayal of the collective. As Richard Bitlack and Nikita Lomagin point out, Leningraders “viewed breads shops as fair game, because they were convinced that the sales staff was short-changing them.”<sup>120</sup> In January 1942, bread riots and attacks on rationing stations increased. Leningraders “met any refusal [of bread] with force.”<sup>121</sup> An NKVD report detailed the breakdown of the riots, which were not simply sporadic outbreaks of violence, but were concentrated equalitarianism and the community. “Over the last three days there have been instances in which citizens queuing have demanded the servers give them bread several days in advance.”<sup>122</sup> Met with callous opposition from the employees, individuals seized bread

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<sup>119</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 47.

<sup>120</sup> Bitlack and Lomagin, *The Leningrad Blockade*, 313.

<sup>121</sup> Michael Jones, *Leningrad: State of Siege* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 192.

<sup>122</sup> Jones, *Leningrad*, 192.

and distributed it others. Bread riots took a communal form. Rather than devolve into a free-for-all in which individuals used force only for self-preservation, Leningraders parceled out bread that was seized from ration centers.

The communal experience of the bread queue, not simply in the sense of waiting, but the daily monotony of returning, colored the bread queue as a site of social interaction that was largely based around gender. As Lidiya Ginzburg pinpointed, gender differences became particularly acute in the bread queue and rationing stations. The “communality” of waiting in a bread queue was qualified by inherited gender norms. Describing the power of “inherited habits,” Ginzburg touched upon the continuation of entrenched Soviet understandings of gender. Rather than a public renegotiation of gender roles – like in the early weeks of the war when men and women volunteered en masse in relatively equal numbers – a strict division between male and female responsibilities was maintained. “The siege queues were inscribed into an age-old background” of the normalization of women’s role, “into the normal female irritation and the normal female patience.”<sup>123</sup>

Although women formed the bulk of those in the queue, waiting patiently to collect their ration, occasionally a man would enter the bread line. As Ginzburg emphatically noted, “almost every one of the men who turned up in a shop” attempted to skirt the pre-existing queue culture (i.e. patience is a virtue) and “get to the counter before his turn.” Their misinformed sense of “justice,” which “rests on the fact that there are so few of them in the queue,” consistently remained unshaken. A frequent justification shouted out by men was the “classic phrase: ‘I’m in a hurry to get to work.’”

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<sup>123</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 39.

In this instance, a woman retorted: “Everybody’s in a hurry to get to work nowadays!”<sup>124</sup> Even under siege conditions there was still an implicit hierarchical differentiation between male and female roles. Even if a man could internally acknowledge that a woman’s responsibilities were equal to or surpassed his own, “their attitude towards times, its value, use and allocation” differed. “His attitude gives him the right to get bread without queuing for it.”<sup>125</sup> Man’s work was still supreme. A notation by Elena Skrabina is peculiar in this light. In her entry for October 12, 1941, she discusses the sociology of the bread queue, but rather than a scene of women dominating, she writes, “women almost never get into the stores.”<sup>126</sup>

To further illustrate the construction of gender difference in social relations, an example from the factory system will be employed. The factory, in addition to ensuring workers better access to food, was also the site of the creation of “large mutual-support centers.” Within this workshop communities, “workers formed ‘welfare brigades’ (*bytovye brigady*)” creating smaller groups to streamline charitable endeavors such as cleaning crews, maintenance teams, and setting up warming stations.<sup>127</sup> By and large, women, although a minority in the factory workforce, founded, organized and ran these philanthropic undertakings.<sup>128</sup> Some operations were extensive, comprising orphanages, palliative care, burial care, and the obligatory “propaganda lectures.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ginzburg, *Blockade Diary*, 39. Following this last sentence in her diary, Ginzburg offered a differentiation between the usage of the word “we” and “I”. “We” was consistently employed by women: “It’s always *we*” for “a woman is the representative of a collective.” Males on the other hand used “I” for a “man in the queue feels like a stray individual.”

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>126</sup> Skrabina, *Siege and Survival*, 33. perhaps this is one specific experience, but Skrabina does not give specifics. She instead generalizes which seems to demonstrate the generality of this experience.

<sup>127</sup> Bitlack, *Workers at War*, 21.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

Within the public domain, Leningraders were forced, because of the dictates of siege living, to reformulate and re-extend social connections with each other and the wider community. The queue line formed the most common and wide spread site of communal interaction. Leningraders quickly created organic social mechanisms to control and police the bread lines in the absence of government officials and the police. Self-preservation was castigated and the survival of the community as a collective was praised.

## CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

In the dark, frigid days of January 1942, Svetlana Magayeva's mother told her a mantra that Svetlana never forgot, "in the scale of nature each seed is important."<sup>130</sup> Repeatedly having to rely on food gifts from friends and neighbors, Svetlana and her mother's survival was ensured by the relationships—some that had endured the destabilizing atmosphere of the Terror, others were recent iterations of former socially destroyed connections—that provided vital lifelines in time of need. Each relationship, each "seed," that Svetlana and her mother cultivated, proved to be an absolute necessity in enduring and surviving the siege of Leningrad. The exigencies of war and Leningrad's position as a military front fostered an environment in which individuals had to re-development and then rely on social connections and relationships that were largely pruned back during the late pre-war period.

In her recent and provocative study of WWII and food, Lizzy Collingham, highlights that the global conflagration was coupled with massive loss of life, not only on the military front, but amongst the civilian population due directly to food shortages, scarcity and famine:

It is perhaps the quiet and unobtrusive nature of death by starvation which explains why many of those who died of hunger during the Second World War are largely forgotten today. While the Vietnam war is firmly embedded in the western collective memory, most westerners have never heard of the famine in the Vietnamese region of Tonkin in 1943-44 which probably killed more peasants than all the years of war which followed.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Magayeva and Pleysier, *Surviving the Blockade*, 55.

<sup>131</sup> Lizzy Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2011), 2.

Coupled with war, food scarcity and starvation directly impacted millions around the globe. In fact, more deaths are attributable to the lack of food than to military conflict.<sup>132</sup> Food was a political commodity during the war. The German decision to blockade Leningrad was repeated across the continent. During the winter of 1944-45, over twenty thousand Dutch starved to death as the Germans, in retaliation for the Allies liberation of much of the Low Countries, cut off supplies to non-liberated regions.<sup>133</sup>

Although there is an abundance of scholarship on the relationship between war and famine, and particularly through specific case studies of individual historical cases of mass starvation (literature of the siege of Leningrad is perhaps the most prolific), little analysis has been done on the transformative effects of food scarcity on a population. This investigation emphasizes the necessity of moving beyond the tragic portrayals of hunger and starvation that dominate siege scholarship in an effort to analyze the individual and accrued human experience that positions the siege as a transformative experience. It is possible to acknowledge the catastrophic suffering and loss of life of the city's inhabitants without fixating on these grim details. Life did go on, and although food dominated people's minds for months, individuals continued to reformulate their social relationships even with pervasive starvation. Furthermore, tracing how individuals actively re-entered the social sphere and reformulated their networks—familial, fictive, public—feeds into two larger historical fields: the study of the city during wartime, specifically during WWII and the history of famine in the modern era.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Collingham is conservative in her estimate. At the low end, she cites 20 million as the starting point for worldwide deaths attributed to starvation directly because of the war. For military deaths, she cites 19.5 million deaths.

<sup>133</sup> Collingham, *the Taste of War*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Although I chose to focus on the former historical field, there is a large literature on the study of famine on populations in general, and urban populations in particular. General scholarship on the relations (and effects of) famine and human populations: Pitirim Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity: the Effects of*

By the end of the 1930s, many of the previous social connections and relationships that individuals possessed had been strategically pruned to such an extent that the family provided the only social organization that was both safe and resilient. The Terror that engulfed Soviet society throughout the late 1930s produced successive waves of social destabilization. Increasingly, it became pragmatic to cut off ties with non-essential relations all in an effort to stymie any top-down or bottom-up initiatives to label individuals “counterrevolutionaries” or “wreckers” of the Revolution.

The centrality of food during the almost three year blockade of the city, forced individuals to extend and re-cultivate relationships that were dormant since the pre-war period. Once again, the family provided the core unit of siege survival, and although at times, the family system was pushed to the limits through the trauma of siege life, it rarely broke, demonstrating an elasticity that was honed during the Terror. With the family unit at the core, individuals then began to re-cultivate relationships within the apartment complex. These relationships proved more than vital, they proved to be life sustaining. By definition, blockade life forced individuals back into the community to survive. The war created a vacuum in authority in which Leningraders were able to renegotiate their social connections. Moreover, in the public setting of the bread queue, individuals were forced to craft social mechanisms that provided some type of mediation for community interactions. Blockade life engendered the creation of siege taboos, organic bottom-up social constraints that increasingly dictated public interactions.

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*War, Revolution, Famine and Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life* (New York, 1922); A.K. Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); for Russian famines: William Dando, *The Geography of Famine* (London; 1980); S.G. Wheatcroft, ‘Famine and Factors Affecting Mortality in the USSR: The Demographic Crises of 1914-22 and 1930-33’, in CREES Discussion Papers 20 and 21 (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1981).

The blockade of Leningrad was one of the worst episodes in modern history. Well over a million people lost their lives, largely due to starvation. But dearth necessitated a revival of social relationships and connections that were largely eroded during the pre-war period due to government and public pressures. Social structures and relationships were not static during the blockade period and rather than perpetuate insular social organizational patterns that had become normalized during the Terror, individuals had to once again reformulate social connections because of the very nature of siege life. The constant quest for food and the ever-haunting presence of death jump-started social structures that were largely defunct since the pre-war period.

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