

Harrison E. Salisbury

THE **900** DAYS

The Siege of Leningrad

NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

A DA CAPO PAPERBACK

12 • Even the Dead

THE PEOPLE—IN THE STREETS, IN THE PARKS, IN THE SHOPS, in the working factories—listened to Molotov's broadcast at noon, announcing the outbreak of war with rapt attention. He spoke flatly in his usual unemotional way. Only an occasional tremor revealed his tension. He began:

"Men and women, citizens of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government and its head, Comrade Stalin, have instructed me to make the following announcement: At 4 A.M., without declaration of war and without any claims being made on the Soviet Union, German troops attacked our country, attacked our frontier in many places and bombed from the air Zhitomir, Kiev, Sevastopol, Kaunas and other cities. . . . This attack has been made despite the fact that there was a nonaggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany, a pact the terms of which were scrupulously observed by the Soviet Union. We have been attacked although during the period of the pact the German Government had not made the slightest complaint about the U.S.S.R.'s not carrying out its obligations. . . ."

"The government calls upon you, men and women citizens of the Soviet Union, to rally even more closely around the glorious Bolshevik Party, around the Soviet Government and our great leader, Comrade Stalin. Our cause is just. The enemy will be crushed. Victory will be ours."

Only a few wondered why it was Molotov, not Stalin, who spoke to the country. And certainly none, outside the tightest, innermost circle of the Kremlin, suspected the truth—that Stalin had been thrust into traumatic depression from which he would not emerge for many days and weeks.

What people did realize was that war had started. By 1 P.M., a few minutes after Molotov's speech, queues, especially in the food stores, began to grow. At the State Savings Banks lines formed. Depositors wanted their money. The women shoppers in the *gastronoms* or grocery stores started to buy indiscriminately—canned goods (which Russians do not like very much), butter, sugar, lard, flour, groats, sausage, matches, salt. In twenty years of Soviet power Leningraders had learned by bitter experience what to expect

in time of crisis. They rushed to the stores to buy what they could. They gave preference to foods which would keep. But they were not particular. One shopper bought five kilos of caviar, another ten.

At the savings banks the people clutched worn and greasy passbooks in their hands. They were drawing out every ruble that stood to their accounts. Many headed straight for the commission shops. There they turned over fat packets of paper money for diamond rings, gold watches, emerald earrings, oriental rugs, brass samovars.

The crowds outside the savings banks quickly became disorderly. No one wanted to wait. They demanded their money *seichas*—immediately. Police detachments appeared. By 3 p.m. the banks had closed, having exhausted their supply of currency. They did not reopen again until Tuesday (Monday was their closed day). When they opened again, the government had imposed a limit on withdrawals of two hundred rubles per person per month.

The food and department stores stayed open. So did the commission shops. Many persons had hoards of paper rubles hidden at home. They took the money and bought anything which had a hard value.

Leningrad housewives cleaned out many smaller grocery stores on Sunday afternoon. It was their second recent experience in food hoarding. They had descended like locusts on the stores at the time of the winter war with Finland. Hoarding was an old Russian custom. No one who had lived in Leningrad since World War I had much confidence in the government's ability to maintain normal supplies of food. The story of every past war—and not a few peacetime years—had been one of short supplies and hardship.

There was a run on vodka stocks. By mid-evening bottle supplies were exhausted. Not a few cafés and restaurants sold out, too. The vodka was not for immediate drinking. It was also being hoarded.

In the factories and offices mass meetings were called. Many big factories were operating that Sunday, among them the Elektrosila, the Krasny Viburzhets, the Skorokhod, because the city was experiencing a power shortage and Sunday operations had been instituted to spread the load. Party secretaries at these plants got a warning call from Smolny about 9 a.m., and in many of them there were secret meetings of key Party workers before 11 a.m. Then, after Molotov's radio speech, public meetings for all the plants were held.

That Sunday afternoon, Olga Berggolts was sitting in her flat in Leningrad. She lived in a curious apartment built as a cooperative early in the 1930's by a group of young (very young, it now seemed) engineers and artists. The official name of the building at No. 9 Ulitsa Rubinshtein was "The Communal House of Artists and Engineers." But to all Leningrad it had long been known as the "Tears of Socialism." It was an unusual house—a monument to the burning passion of the writers and engineers in the early days of the Revolution to have done with the hideous trappings of bourgeois existence. There was nothing in the "Tears of Socialism" to remind one of

old, outmoded ways. No kitchens. No mops. No place in the whole building for cooking or individual meals. No entryways with coat racks. No coat racks—except for communal ones.

The house had been built for collective living of the most collective kind. Its architecture was pseudo Le Corbusier. Leningraders liked to joke that in the "Phalanstery on Rubinshtein" no families were permitted.

The jokes long since had gone as stale as the experimental theories of communal existence. But Olga Berggolts and most of the inhabitants of the building had a desperate fondness for it, despite its crankiness. It was, in a sense, a link to their youth and to a time of enthusiasm which now seemed to belong to a different age and even to a different generation and different people.

It was not merely that communal living had turned out to be a more depressing fad than anyone could have imagined. It was all the rest that had happened during the 1930's. Olga Berggolts was a poet, a child of the Revolution, a woman of talent and of courage, a woman whose clear blue eyes saw the world with a sad honesty taught by the harsh Russian life, a woman whose wide Russian brow bore the imprint of suffering, a woman whose gentle tenderness had been forged in sorrow and injustice. As a schoolgirl on the day of Lenin's funeral, at 4 p.m., Sunday, January 27, 1924, Olga Berggolts stood with a friend outside the old house near the Narva Gates where she lived. She listened to the din of the factory whistles, the blast of the steam locomotives, the bells and the sirens which at that moment sounded all over Russia in tribute to Lenin. When quiet returned and the air still seemed to vibrate with the departing echo of the sound, she turned to her friend and announced: "I'm going to join the Young Communists and be a professional revolutionary. Like Lenin."

By the 1930's that brave resolution was being sorely tested. The thirties took from her two daughters, one dying after the other. And then came what she still called the "heavy experience" of 1937-39, the years in which she was in prison and labor camps, one of the countless victims of Stalin's endless purges.

Before the years in prison she had been a lyric poet, a writer of verses and stories for children. But prison brought her to maturity, as a woman and as an artist. Now on this lovely June 22 Olga Berggolts put down on paper her thoughts—a poem which was not (and could not be) published for many years. She tried to express what she felt for her country, for her Motherland, for herself:

I did not on this day forget

The bitter years of oppression and of evil.

But in a blinding flash I understood:

It was not I but you who suffered and waited.

No, I have forgotten nothing,

But even the dead and the victims

Will rise from the grave at your call;
We will all rise, and not I alone.

I love you with a new love
Bitter, all-forgiving, bright—
My Motherland with the wreath of thorns
And the dark rainbow over your head. . . .
I love you—I cannot otherwise—
And you and I are one again, as before.

In those hours after the German attack became known many citizens of Leningrad were subjecting themselves to a new examination of conscience, a difficult and searching inquiry into the precise nature of their feelings.

Not all were like Olga Berggolts; not all were able to put behind them the cruelty, the suffering, the savagery, the smashed dreams and the broken illusions of the past decade; not all were able to feel in this fateful hour that patriotism and the Motherland came first. There were those who privately, or perhaps not so privately, saw in the German attack a cause for rejoicing. The Germans, they thought, would liberate Leningrad and Russia from the rule of the hated Bolsheviks.

It is not likely that anyone will ever know how many of these dissidents there were, but certainly some thousands of people in that first moment did not view the German attack as sheer tragedy. Dmitri Konstantinov, who went on to become a Red Army commander and who fought through the most savage Leningrad battles, was one whose thoughts were a mixture on that Sunday afternoon.

The idea of war was terrible, but he could not turn his mind away from the past decade—the executions, the exiles, the arrests, the terror, the informer, the fear, the midnight knock on the door. How many now languished in Stalin's prisons and camps? Possibly twenty million, he thought. Might not the war bring freedom to them? Might not this new horror bring in its train some good? Might it not lift from Russia's back the savage burden of the Bolsheviks and give the nation a chance for a new, normal, humane life?

The answer was beyond discovery. He well knew the agony of modern war. He knew, too, the bestiality of Hitler, his racist theories, the insane pretenses of *Mein Kampf*. Which would bring the worse tragedy to Russia—Stalin or Hitler? Who could say?

That evening Konstantinov and a friend went to the Maly Opera Theater and sat through the performance of *Gypsy Baron*. The theater was two-thirds full. During the entr'acte the audience promenaded in the foyer. But there was not the usual animation. People were silent or spoke in hushed whispers.

After the performance Konstantinov and his friend walked as far as the Troitsky Bridge. It was full daylight, of course, but automobiles had begun to show dim blue headlights. Blue lights had been installed on the streetcars and in the entrance halls of buildings.

The Neva flowed quietly and grandly past the great buildings of the city, washing the granite embankments with its restless current.

The talk of Konstantinov and his friend was gloomy. They would, of course, go into the army and fight for their country. But what would the future bring?

In the communal apartment where Yelena Skryabina lived there lived as well a microcosm of Leningrad. Across the hall resided Lyubov Nikolayevna Kurakina. For the past two years Lyubov's husband, a dedicated Communist and Party worker, had languished in prison, convicted as an "enemy of the people." He was still there. His wife, a staunch Communist, had wavered in her convictions during the imprisonment of her husband, but on Sunday evening her Communist feelings flowed back in full vigor. She forgot the injuries she had suffered and treated her neighbors to a windy oration about the invincibility of Soviet Russia.

Listening from a perch on a tall chest was another neighbor, Anastasiya Vladimirovna. She smiled sarcastically at the oratory of Lyubov. She had never bothered to conceal her hatred for the Soviet regime. With the onset of war she saw for the first time hope of rescue from the Bolsheviks.

Yelena Skryabina shared not a few of Vladimirovna's sentiments. But she was wise and experienced enough to know that the future held no simple or easy choice. She, like most of her countrywomen, was a Russian patriot. She could not wish for Russia's defeat at the hands of an hereditary enemy. Yet she knew that such a defeat might well be the only way of ending a regime which was cruel, eccentric and vicious.

The question was different for Dmitri A. Shcheglov, a writer and a firm Party member. He had come back Saturday night from Petrozavodsk in Karelo-Finland, where he had gone for the premiere of a new play, *The Treasure of Sampo*. In the train compartment a Red Army colonel and a major were talking about the large numbers of German troops in Finland. The talk left him worried. He was not too surprised when his wife, who had gone to the theater where she worked, telephoned on Sunday and told him about the war. His wife was going on to a Party meeting.

Shcheglov sat for a time, trying to decide what to do. It was quiet. The clock ticked monotonously. Probably this is the last quiet moment in a long time, he thought. His daughter came into the room.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

By this time his mind was clear. "Go on the same as every day," he said firmly, little knowing that within ten days he would be signing up for the front in the People's Volunteers.

It was different, too, for youngsters like Ivan Kanashin and Andrei Piven in the town of Gryady in the Leningrad region. The two boys found most of their high school graduating class gathered in the central park a little after noon. The whole town was there as well. Grigori Vasilyevich Volkonsky, the Soviet deputy, was making a patriotic speech.

When the talk was over, the youngsters conferred excitedly. What should

they do? Where should they go? They were seventeen, too young for the Red Army. But there must be some place. They headed for Malaya Vishera, the nearest larger town. There they were sure they would be able to volunteer. They went to the Communist Youth office. Dozens of youngsters were ahead of them. Only seventeen-year-olds were accepted. Exactly what their duties would be none knew. But Andrei Piven, Kolya Grishin, the best football player in school, Misha Vasilyev and Ivan Kanashin signed up. They were told to go home, collect some clothes, say good-bye and report for duty on Tuesday. Their parents cried, but there were no clouds in the minds of the youngsters. They were off to serve their country.

The reasons for the doubts, the torment, the hesitations, the mixed mood of so many Leningraders were deeply rooted and profoundly tragic.

From the moment of its founding by Peter on May 16, 1703, Leningrad, or Petrograd, or St. Petersburg—whatever name it had borne—had been a special city and its people a special people. The character of the northern capital was fully formed long before the 1917 Revolution, and it was this character which gave to that Revolution its essential spirit.

In St. Petersburg for a hundred years before 1917 the Revolution had been in gestation. The tragic failure of the noble young officers who in 1825 sought to bring the government enlightenment within the framework of czarism by converting it to European parliamentarism—the ill-fated Decembrist movement—had been the initial effort by the northern capital to propel the Romanovs out of medieval tyranny.

When the Decembrists failed (and were executed or exiled with their young wives to the most remote and harsh lands of the Empire, east of Irkutsk to the dismal mines of Petrovsky Zavod), their example lived on as an inspiration for generation after generation of Petersburg youth.

To this was joined the legend of Pushkin, the poet whose Byronic image became the ideal of Russian youth. Pushkin was a martyr in the same cause. There was hardly a youngster in "Piter" (as they called their northern capital) who did not believe that Czar Nicholas I had a hand in provoking the quarrel which led to Pushkin's fatal duel and death.

Decade succeeded decade through the nineteenth century. Each brought to St. Petersburg new martyrs, new revolutionaries, new idols. The roll grew too long to recite—Alexander Herzen, Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, the young men and women of the *Narodnya Volya*—the People's Will. The anarchists, Bakunin, the assassins, young Aleksandr Ulyanov, Lenin's older brother, the writers, the Dostoyevskys, the Turgenyevs, the Chekhovs, the Tolstoyes. Not all lived or worked in "Piter." But they contributed to its spirit.

The city grew great. It was Russia's window on the West—the center of the most advanced, the richest, the most cultured, the most revolutionary society of the land and a burgeoning industrial center. Here the new Russian industrial aristocracy had its birth. Here rose the smoky chimneys of the

Putilov steel works. Here became established the big foreign entrepreneurs, Siemens and Hals, Thornton, Langesippen, Laferme, Grapp, James Beck, Stieglitz, Maxwell, Frank, Singer Sewing Machine, International Harvester, McCormick.

On the Nevsky Prospekt, great billboards proclaimed the virtues of the Singer Sewing Machine. The Equitable Life Insurance Company occupied handsome quarters, and nearby were the stores of the Bessels and the brothers Mory.

It was here that the Academy of Sciences had been founded by Peter and developed by Catherine. Here the flower of Russian science and scholarship—Lomonosov, Mendeleev, Sechenov and the great Pavlov—had lived and worked.

St. Petersburg was an imperial city, *the* Imperial City. It had been created in imperial scope. Its architecture, its buildings echoed this theme. Peter and Catherine and their successors consciously and devotedly sought to erect on the Neva a capital grander than any in the world. In this they in large measure succeeded. The great ensembles, the long promenade of palaces along the Neva embankments, the network of canals and small streams—the Fontanka, the Moika, the Catherine Canal, Nevsky Prospekt and the palaces of the Stroganovs, the Anichkovs, the Engineers Castle, the Tauride Palace, the Champs de Mars, the Summer Gardens, the more distant grandeurs of Peterhof, the Catherine Palace at Tsarskoye Selo—all this made "Piter" a magical and remarkable metropolis.

Yet the capital not only was built on a dismal marsh which had claimed the lives of thousands of the laborers whom Peter assigned to it; it was erected upon the ramshackle, shoddy, cruel foundations of czarist despotism combined with the worst oppressions of the early industrial era. Poverty, starvation, beggary, prostitution, all the diseases of malnutrition and the afflictions of illiteracy marked the slums and the workers' quarters of the Petrograd side and the Vyborg quarter.

Out of this breeding ground and the incredible decadence of the court of Nicholas II in its last phases of Rasputin and World War I the Russian Revolution had been born.

It was born as every Leningrader knew (and took pride in) in Petrograd. It was born of Petrograd suffering, Petrograd spirit, the Petrograd milieu. And it was born, as it were, spontaneously. No one organized it. No one plotted it (although generations of young Russians had plotted revolution for years, they had no hand in this). It took its origin from the despair and rebellion of women, standing in queues at the bread shops, day after day, only to receive no bread. Finally, in March of 1917 (February 26 by the old Russian calendar) these feelings boiled over.

Within three days the structure of the Russian imperial rule collapsed like a punctured puffball. All that remained was a little dirty powder in the palm of the hand.

Petrograd was the site and scene of the second revolution—the Bolshevik Revolution. It was to Petrograd that Lenin returned, to the Finland Station, on that April day of 1917 to proclaim his Maximalist demands—revolution, no quarter to the provisional government, all power to the Soviets—the demands which so disturbed, frightened and surprised his home-grown followers like Stalin and Molotov, the young men of the Bolshevik movement who really did not know what Bolshevism was until Lenin had defined it with his quick, dark brush strokes.

Here Lenin brewed his *coup d'état* and rode to power over the backs of Kerensky and his provisional moderates, who fell almost as easily as had imperial czarism.

It was a Petrograd tragedy, still deeply felt by its citizens, that in the hour of desperate German threat in March of 1918 Lenin “temporarily” removed the seat of Soviet Government to Moscow.

More than twenty years had now passed on this June 22, 1941, and the Soviet capital was still in Moscow. The years had not been easy for Leningrad. Even before Lenin's death in 1924 the change had begun. With Moscow as the center, the Revolution took on a different tone, a different content. Perhaps this was inevitable. Perhaps it would have happened even if the capital had not been moved to Moscow. But no one in “Piter” felt quite sure of this.

For the fact was that for two hundred years a struggle for the soul of Russia, for the leadership of the great Slav land, had been in progress.

On the one side were the Muscovites, dowdy, greedy, rude, vigorous, led by the conservative Orthodox clergy and the grasping Moscow merchant class, the “*meshchanskye*,” the tough, heavy-handed, vodka-drinking families which had risen from the peasantry over the backs of their own kind, conservative, set against change, isolationist, fearing and hating Europe, fearing and hating St. Petersburg, which symbolized for them all that was new, progressive, stylish—and dangerous.

And on the other side was St. Petersburg, its eyes on the brilliance of Paris and Rome (although its heart might still be on the Volga), its style set by the West, ecumenical, industrial, heavily foreign (French, not Russian, was the language of society), looking down on backward, muddy, dusty Moscow as the back country from which it had sprung, regarding Moscow as the symbol of red tape, backwardness, crudeness, vulgarity, provinciality.

With the transfer of the capital back to Moscow, Leningrad began to feel the change—and to fear it a little. For two hundred years “Piter” had lorded it over Moscow. Now it was Moscow's turn.

And so it proved to be—with a vengeance, the vengeance of a paranoid and dictatorial ruler whose like Russia had not seen since Ivan the Terrible.

The first signs became evident within a year or two of Lenin's death—in the sharpening struggle between Stalin and the Old Guard Bolsheviks, among

whom was numbered Grigori Zinoyev, the Party boss of Leningrad, one of Lenin's closest associates, the second or third most influential man in Russia.

Zinoyev fell in 1927, and Leningrad saw that its fears of Moscow were not without foundation. Still, at first the change was not too great. Stalin was involved in launching the first Five-Year Plan and embarking on the tragic and bloody collectivization of the peasants. Leningrad stood aside from these massive conflicts. Moreover, she had developed a new and brilliant leader, Sergei Kirov, an adherent of Stalin's but an attractive, able man who was winning the heart of Leningrad and the support of members of the Central Committee who had been frightened and appalled by Stalin's heavy-handed ruthlessness. Indeed, it was rumored that at the great “Congress of Victors,” the Party Congress in January, 1934, at which the worst troubles of both industrialization and collectivization seemed over, Kirov had gotten more votes than Stalin in the elections to the Central Committee.

Then on December 1, 1934, occurred an event which was to mutilate life in Leningrad for years to come. On that day a young man named Leonid V. Nikolayev walked into Kirov's office in Smolny and shot him dead.

That act unleashed upon Leningrad such terror as the world had not seen since the Paris Commune, and not even then. Thousands were arrested. They were shot or sent to concentration camps, labor camps and so-called “isolator prisons.” They were so numerous that they came in later years to be nicknamed “Kirov's assassins.” Swept into the net with these Leningraders (the arrests heavily concentrated among young people, intellectuals, anyone who might by remote classification have indicated in the past any lack of sympathy for the regime), of course, was Zinoyev and with him most of the Old Bolshevik opposition to Stalin.

In fact, the Kirov assassination was the keystone to the terror of the 1930's. It was on the day of Kirov's assassination that the secret police were given special powers, never before granted, under which they could sentence and execute by administrative process anyone in the Soviet Union.

From this assassination flowed the whole regime of terror which bloodied Russia from one end to the other in the ensuing years, continuing up to the start of World War II (although beginning in 1939 a damper was placed on word of arrests—the formality of trial long since had been dispensed with—and many persons, even in Russia, were not quite aware that the purges were continuing).

Nowhere did the terror strike more harshly than in Leningrad.

In Leningrad occurred the worst repressions of 1937-38. Hundreds of leading Party members and important officials were wiped out—among them four secretaries of the city and regional Party committees, four chairmen of the city executive, the head of the young Komsomols and dozens of other top Party figures.

The story of the purge in just one Leningrad factory—the great Red Putilov steel works—has been painstakingly pieced together. The first blows

fell on all who had in any manner been connected with the old Zinovyev group. The plant had hardly been rechristened in Kirov's name before the deputy director, the chief of the Party committee and the foremen of a dozen shops were summarily thrown out of the Party and out of their jobs. In January, 1935, more than 140 persons were discharged—and then arrested—on grounds they had some past connection with the czarist regime, with former industrialists, businessmen, shopkeepers or well-to-do farmers. In short order another 700 persons were rounded up under the category of "class enemies."

Production declined. Every failure to meet a quota and every mistake was blamed on "enemies of the state," either already unmasked or about to be unmasked.

The plant director, Karl Martovich Ots, an honorable man, one of the outstanding industrial executives in the Soviet Union, attempted to maintain some order, to protect his personnel from the waves of arrest and vilification. But it was hopeless. One day a T-28 tank was being checked out for delivery to the army when a bolt was found missing. Demands were made to bring the "enemy saboteurs" to light. Ots knew that the fault lay with a mechanic who had simply forgotten to screw in the bolt. At personal risk, Ots refused to permit a witch hunt. But it was like attempting to hold back the tide with a sand pail. A purge of Party members in the factory was carried out, in which more hundreds vanished.

The pace of arrests slackened a bit in 1936, then resumed with a rush in 1937. Into the maw vanished Ots, who had just been named to head the great Izhorsk factory and for whom a gleaming tablet of honor had been erected in the reception room of the Kirov plant. Along with him went his successor at the Kirov works, M. Ye. Ter-Asaturov, the heads of the bookkeeping department, the tank production units, the personnel department, the machine-tool shop and dozens of others. Not to mention former Kirov plant workers who had risen to high government and Party posts—the Mayor of Leningrad, Aleksei Petrovsky; the secretary of the Neva Party region and the Novosibirsk Party secretary, Ivan Alekseyev.

Most of the chiefs of big industrial organizations were shot, among them Ots, Ter-Asaturov, and I. F. Antyukhin, head of the Power Trust. Almost every Leningrad industry lost its director and most of its top personnel. The Leningrad military command was wiped out with the execution of the District Commander, General P. Ye. Dybenko, and the commander of the Baltic Fleet, Admiral A. K. Sivkov.

A new Party leadership was installed and Zhdanov was brought in from Nizhni-Novgorod (now Gorky) for that purpose. Zhdanov, a powerful, ambitious man, never won the love of Leningrad, but by the outbreak of World War II he had stamped his mark on the city and was to impress it even more indelibly as the war went on.

Not only did the purges start in Leningrad. It was in Leningrad that they

were given their characteristic leitmotiv of macabre paranoia. For, as was obvious even at the time, long suspected by Leningraders, and confirmed after Stalin's death, the assassination of Kirov was not the act of a single disgruntled, deranged individual. There was something very, very peculiar about the murder. It was, in fact, inspired or contrived by Stalin himself. The murder was arranged by Stalin's own police, and among the first victims of the post-assassination purge were the police officers who had a hand in setting up the situation which made Kirov's killing possible.

It was this circumstance—the impelling evidence that Moscow now had ascendancy over Leningrad; the tangible clues of a persisting fear, if not hatred, of Leningrad on the part of Stalin; the general atmosphere of terror, banality and vulgarity which had been brought to the Soviet scene by Stalin—which created in Leningrad at the outbreak of war an atmosphere of unusual inwardness and self-examination.

There were few Leningraders of intellectual capacity who would not have viewed the overthrow of Stalin with emotions ranging from grim satisfaction to unrestrained delight. But few were so unsophisticated as to suppose they would be confronted with a simple choice. The alternative of Hitler—even though they had not yet experienced directly the horrors of Nazism—was not really a viable alternative to the horror of Stalin.

With occasional exceptions, therefore, it could be predicted on June 22 that Leningrad and the Leningraders would close ranks and defend their great city with the patriotism and love which had always been their strongest characteristic.

It was, after all, *their* city and *their* Russia, and for those of revolutionary spirit it was *their* Revolution—not Stalin's. Leningrad was steadfast. As their greatest poetess, Anna Akhmatova, had written in a time of incredible tragedy only a year or so before:

No, I lived not under foreign skies,
Sheltering under foreign wings:
I then stayed with my people,
There where my people, unhappily, were.

Leningrad would, when all was said and done, fight—fight to the best of its capacity and hope that victory might bring a better day.

This, quite naturally, was the mood of Iosif Orbeli, director of the Hermitage, that Sunday afternoon. He slammed the door of his office and charged up the staircase to the long corridor that flanked the galleries. He strode forward, looking to neither one side nor the other. But he was on no urgent mission; he was simply working off anger. He had telephoned the Committee on Arts in Moscow half a dozen times in the past two hours, trying to get instructions, or clearance to go ahead with the evacuation of the Hermitage. That it must be evacuated he had no doubt. Already German bombers had attacked a dozen cities. At any moment they might appear over

Leningrad. He stopped a moment and looked out across the Neva. He saw beyond the spire of the Peter and Paul Fortress a fat gray sausage—one of the first anti-aircraft balloons rising into the air. Orbeli made up his mind. He told the guards to close the museum halls and admit no more visitors. Then he went to his office and summoned his colleagues. Moscow hadn't called yet. All right. He would go ahead without Moscow. Forty of the most precious treasures—the Leonardo da Vincis, Raphaels, Rembrandts and Rubenses—would be taken from the walls and carried down to stone vaults in the cellars. Plans would be made for evacuation. If it wasn't possible to begin packing this afternoon, then the work must start first thing Monday morning.

Suddenly he looked at the calendar. It still showed Saturday's date. Mechanically, he tore off the Saturday sheet. The new date, Sunday, June 22, appeared.

Orbeli looked up. A thought had come to him: "Napoleon, if I'm not mistaken, attacked Russia also in June—was it the twenty-fourth of June?"

The thought of Napoleon changed Orbeli's mood. He smiled, looking a bit like Mephistopheles when he did so. Napoleon and now Hitler. Not a bad precedent to bear in mind.