

Everyday Life in Wartime Arkhangelsk: The Problem of Starvation and Death during the Second World War (1939–1945)

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The article is based on primary sources: interviews with eyewitnesses, memoirs, materials of press, diaries and archival documents. During the Second World War more than 40 thousand civilians died in Arkhangelsk (one fourth of its prewar population) because of starvation. This paper is an attempt to explain this phenomenon.

Introduction

A war is a multi-dimensional and social phenomenon, reflecting all aspects of society, which are projected on the conflict with the outside world. A society in war has to mobilize all its forces and resource potential, but the key is always in the actual human capital, including a set of phenomena pertaining to the spiritual and psychological sphere from the value orientations of society to its psychological stability determined by a number of socio-cultural, historical and situational factors. No less important are material conditions of human existence, skills to overcome the difficulties in wartime, which formed special survival strategies for the population.

The total character of the World wars manifested itself in involvement into their orbit of huge masses of the civilian population. War had become a phenomenon profoundly affecting the whole society that led to a blurring of the boundaries between the front and rear. Therefore, the problem of survival of the civilian population in wartime became increasingly burning. It is closely intertwined with the problem of hunger and the search for food resources.

One of the key problems of Soviet cities during the Second World War was the problem of hunger. The Soviet system of distribution led to the starvation of large numbers of the population in everyday Soviet life during whole periods of Soviet power in the 1920–1950s. It was also typical for the whole time of the Second World War, but the most tragic period in Soviet history was connected with the Nazi invasion of Russia and the beginning of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945).¹

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¹ In the Russian history the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) began from the Nazi invasion of Russia. It is the period of open warfare and decisive confrontation between Germany and the USSR. From August

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The Great Patriotic War is one of the most tragic periods of Soviet history, Russian North and Arkhangelsk. Though Arkhangelsk was one of the main ports that transshipped thousands of tons of the Allies' lend-lease supplies, including food, its population died because of hunger. Only according to official statistics (data of registry office), 38,000 inhabitants of Arkhangelsk died of starvation during 1941–1944 – i.e. one fifth of its prewar population. But the real number of deaths was much greater.

The aim of this article is to present the living conditions of the population in wartime Arkhangelsk and to trace the processes of people's adaptation to the extreme conditions of war and their struggles to avoid the horrible death from starvation as well as the consequences of that for the population. This research is based on a wide range of historical sources, especially on archival documents (memos, news reports, summaries, intended for the central government and inaccessible to researchers for many years) and sources of personal origin (diaries, letters, and memoirs as well as interviews with eyewitnesses of war). The use of recently declassified archival documents provides a more complete picture of life during wartime. The most important source among the sources of personal origin is the diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky², because it is not the latest reproduction of feelings and events in memoirs, but a daily record of the everyday change of way of life associated with the war. From the diary we can get the most exact information about food-supply in the first days of war, food prices, queues with thousands of people, remarks of people in relation to the war and Soviet power. The diarist was negatively disposed to Soviet power, so he was arrested in January 1942 and sent to Gulag, where he died.

Work with memoirs is closely related to memory problems. Human memory is not perfect: protective psychological mechanisms force out the most horrible moments from memory. Memoirs or interviews may not fully reflect the reality because they are very subjective reproductions which depend on personal life experience. For example, employees of the Communist Party apparatus and teachers

¹⁹³⁹ to June 1941 USSR and Germany were allies, but 22 June 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union that led to war between them and a change of the military-political situation in Europe. The main theater of war became the Eastern front, where the military confrontation between the USSR and Germany reached apogee. The USSR was supported by the United Kingdom and the United States. Before 1944 this support was consisted mainly of food supplies, equipment and weapons. Only in 1944 a second front by allies was opened in Normandy – the beginning of actual common military operations between the Allies and the Soviet Union and Germany and its allies.

² From the diary of a resident of the city of Arkhangelsk, Filadelf Parshinsky from June 21, 1941 to January 2, 1942 / War. The Captured Days of 1941–1942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005

depending on the system of propaganda tend to exaggerate the achievements of the Soviet power. Here the researcher has to resort to «catch»-questions to get more or less reliable information. But one of the most important advantages of interviews as a source is a possibility to ask respondents some questions, clarify and complete the information. A sound recording created by researchers preserves emotions of respondents. The memoirs-interviews, collected by the author, especially from the «children of war», are very emotional and colorful pictures with a great number of details of everyday life during the Second World War in the Russian North.

People who understood all failures of the Soviet regime, especially intelligentsia and intellectual elite, were subjected to severe persecution by the Soviet regime, especially in the era of Stalinism. Most of them were exterminated. The memoirs of nature representative of intelligentsia, Maria Pickel, made my research more complete and interesting. Her father, a famous doctor from St. Petersburg, was sent to Solovki Special Purpose Camp, then lived in Lahta, a little village near Arkhangelsk with a tuberculosis hospital. Since the early 1930s the family of Maria Pickel lived in Arkhangelsk. In wartime Maria was a novice doctor, a young lady, and she told us about her life without embellishment. The memoirs of Maria Pickel are one of the most important depictions of life during wartime, especially the moral atmosphere. She had never been a supporter or an opponent of the Soviet regime, but she saw all the injustice and problems of this time, understood all and told about that. Now her name is widely known in the medical community in Russia as well as abroad. She studied the problems of tuberculosis, meningitis, rickets in children, dystrophy, sepsis, chronic pneumonia. Maria Pickel was standing at the origins of pediatric services in Arkhangelsk and Arkhangelsk region, due to her initiative and with her participation the Pediatrics faculty was opened, she was the first head of the Department of Pediatrics. She was the first female Doctor of Medicine in Arkhangelsk region; she brought up several generations of experienced physicians, doctors and candidates of sciences. In Germany she was recognized as the best translator of poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. Memoirs of Maria Pickel have never been published by her request.

One of the most important sources for the history of everyday life during the first period of the Second World War are the letters of the famous historian, archaeologist, geologist Vasiliy Smirnov. He was exiled from Kostroma to Arkhangelsk in 1931 and lived there till his death in 1941.

Conditions of life of the Soviet people before and in the first period of the Second World War 1939–1941

The problems of wartime of Arkhangelsk as well as in other Soviet cities had been aggravated by the situation in the Soviet society in the 1920–1930s. The tragedy of wartime will not be completely clear without information about the history of Arkhangelsk and life in the European North during the Soviet regime before the Second World War, in the 1930s.

From the 16th century Arkhangelsk was a famous international city. The interaction of northern ingenuity and western entrepreneurial effort led to remarkably developed industry and trade, international cultural connections between Russia and the West. In the beginning of the 20th century it was one of the most beautiful places in the architectural heritage of the European North, but in 1929–1936 Arkhangelsk lost this status as well as the most part of the culture heritage.

In 1929 Arkhangelsk became the capital of the Soviet North (Northern Region) and forest industry exports of the USSR, «all-Union sawmill» for the Soviet power. During the time of the Soviet regime Arkhangelsk region became the place of exile for dissidents and undesirable political and cultural figures, as well as whole classes and groups of the population which were unwanted for the regime. In 1928–1929 Arkhangelsk was crowded with pre-revolution («bourgeois») specialists and representatives of intelligentsia, former nobles and imperial officials, intellectuals who were exiles from the big cities such as Moscow and Leningrad during the campaign against «socially alien elements». For this reason, the famous inventor of television, Boris Rozing lived there in 1929–1933. In 1933 he died of hunger and hard living conditions in exile³.

In 1929–1933 Arkhangelsk was overcrowded with dispossessed peasants who were deported from their motherland to the Russian North during the campaign of collectivization. Most of them were arrested as «kulaks» and became «special settlers». In Arkhangelsk they worked in the wood industry and in construction. Most of them were transported through Arkhangelsk with hundreds of thousands of political and criminal prisoners to become a forced cheap labor for the state in different parts of the region. In 1929–1932 about 51 % of «special settlers» died because of starvation and infectious diseases (during 1929–1933 300,000 «special

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³ *Kupaygorodskaya A.P.* Boris Lvovich Rozing. The letters from the exile. / Collection of scientific articles: Figures of Russian science XIX-XX centuries. First Edition. – SPb .: 2011, p. 61.

settlers» were evicted to the Arkhangelsk north)⁴. In 1935, 1937–1939 and 1940 new groups of «special settlers» came to Arkhangelsk region – they consisted mainly of deported nations (Germans, Poles, Chechens, Baltic nations and others)⁵.

In 1923 a special-purpose camp was established on the Solovetsky islands which became the model for creating other Special Purpose Camps in the USSR. The first camps of this type were created in the European North of Russia (Northern Special Purpose Camp, White Sea-Baltic camp, Ukhto-Pechora Forced Labor Camp) and spread over the outskirts of the USSR. In the 1930–1950s Arkhangelsk became one of the biggest Northern centers of a network of forced-labor camps, often known as the GULAG. In 1939 there were seven forced labor camps in Arkhangelsk region, three of them were in the immediate vicinity of Arkhangelsk⁶. Soviet prisoners and special settlers built roads, industrial centers and cities, sawed wood, extracted metal and minerals. In fact, they created the Soviet civilization.

In the 1929–1930s a reorganization and centralization of the repressive system took place in the USSR. By 1929 all places of detention were subordinated to the OGPU (after 1934 – NKVD). Fear in the Soviet society was growing. Arkhangelsk population also suffered greatly from the Soviet repressive system. The continuous series of arrests took place in Arkhangelsk in 1929–1954, especially in the period of Great terror (1936–19387). Repressions of the 1930s led to the destruction of the staff of the Red Army, industry and agriculture, science and culture as well as other areas of state and social life of the USSR. The problems of time of the period of Second World Was were mostly caused by the events of the 1930s.

Economic policy under Joseph Stalin was dominated by the urgency of rapid industrialization; urbanization was a necessary part of that industrial policy. Stalin was convinced that in the near future Russia would have to fight a major war for its survival. The foreign political situation justified his expectations partly, but the military-bureaucratic methods of management and general state control in all areas of life, as well as the ultimate centralization and cruel repression led to the systemic crisis in the society. The most important factor of this time was the fear of a great machine of repression against all categories of the population. Industrial growth in cities and the creation of a powerful totalitarian state machine were paid by millions

⁴ *Korotaev V.* Demographic problems and the experience of its decision in the Russian North in the second half of XIX – the first third of XX century. Arkhangelsk. 2014. p. 63.

⁵ Korotaev V., p. 95.

⁶ *Upadychev N*. Gulag in the European North of Russia: genesis, functioning, decay (1929–1960). The thesis abstracts for the degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences. Arkhangelsk. 2009, p. 19.

⁷ Period of Great Terror began in Arkhangelsk in 1936 from the big campaign which was held all over the country – the «Deals of spoilers» in all enterprises of industry of town and Arkhangelsk region.

of lives. Millions and millions of Soviet citizens perished or passed through the GULAG-system, the hands of the guards, starvation, diseases and exhaustion. Many of them were forced to work for the system because survival in a totalitarian state meant working in the public service system, in this case people got a right for registration and official state food supplies (affiliation with food stores).

Prior to the adoption of Stalin's constitution in 1936 the society of the USSR was divided into two big categories of people - the Soviet citizens who had the right for state supply and nominal voting rights and derelict persons («disfranchised»). The «disfranchised» were all categories of the population of the USSR who suffered from the Soviet regime: peasants⁸, clergy, former nobles and imperial officials, intellectuals and intelligentsia⁹, former officers and generals of the White Army, former owners of enterprises and small private shops, special immigrants 10 and peasants dispossessed during collectivization, prisoners of GULAG. The Soviet propaganda against those people called them «parasites», «bloodsuckers and dehumanized». They had no right for central state food-supply in the times of food rationing by card system in 1929-1934. According to official statistics they constituted 80% of the population of the USSR11. After the adoption of the Constitution in 1936 which had a declarative nature, those categories of the population were legally equalized with Soviet citizens. However, during the 1930-1950s the majority of people concealed their social origin because the repressive politics of the Soviet power was directed primarily against the «socially alien elements». Everyone could be dismissed, lose housing, be arrested.

Soviet people had to search for various strategies to survive. Peasants escaped from the ruined countryside to the cities, where they could work in factories or

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⁸ The communist ideology recognized peasants as a "backward" class with a deprecated ideology of owners as opposed to the progressive class of workers, so, the property of peasants should be socialized; peasants themselves were to be in the collective farms – Kolkhoz. All who did not wish to enter kolkhozes and give the property or their last grain to the state were repressed and sent to the Gulag. During the collectivization (1929–1933) more than 4.5 million people were forced to leave their villages. Some of them were arrested and sentenced to be shot, others died or sent to the Gulag. They were the most hardworking and smartest peasants.

⁹ Intellectuals and creative intelligentsia had no right for food supply if they were not a part of State Creative Associations (Union of Artists, Union of Composers) or did not work in state organizations (university, library, school) – it meant total control over the creative elite by the totalitarian regime of the USSR.

¹⁰ From 1937 to 1944 about 2,461,000 people of different nations (Koreans, Germans, Poles, Kalmyks, Karachays, Chechens and Ingush Balkarians, Crimean Tatars and other peoples of Transcaucasia) were subjected to total deportations from their traditional settlements to the North, Siberia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan. In 1939–1941 about 400,000 people were deported to the interior of the country from the «new territories» (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, Moldova).

¹¹ Kotkin S. Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization. Berkeley. 1995.

sawmills and became workers, a more protected social category in the Soviet society. Former nobles and intelligentsia tried to get a job in the scientific research institutes and universities, in industrial enterprises as engineers, in the state libraries and schools; they tried to make a living interpreting or in Soviet families as caregivers, teachers of foreign languages, drawing or music teachers. The Soviet regime was unable to exist without former professionals. Representatives of the pre-revolutionary nobles, intellectuals and intelligentsia created the Soviet industry, science and culture in many respects because they were the followers of the pre-revolutionary Russian culture. They were well educated, they had valuable skills in all spheres of life, culture of behavior and communication; so, they were especially checked by the NKVD. Stalin's state kept people in constant fear of dismissal or arrest. Employees of the NKVD fulfilled the plan of search for «enemies of the people» - the system was to justify its existence.

Stalin's policy formed a particular social group, who became conductors of his ideas of industrialization, centralization and destruction of everything alien to the regime. It was a continuous process of making original contracts between the state and social groups. There were many ways of adaptation of people in the totalitarian state system, but they could not save anyone from the all-powerful state machinery and repression from which all ordinary powerless people, but also the representatives of the state apparatus, the NKVD, the top military and their families, members of the upper echelons of the government suffered a lot.

Really only two categories of the population of the Soviet state participated in the distribution of resources: "top government", officially admitted to the state feeding system and the people of the food-supply-system («the new elite»). In the 1930s a different form of self-supplies had been prospering, as well as embezzling and stealing of state products. Actually, these two categories of population distributed resources to their advantage while the vast majority of the Soviet people in the 1930s lived in poverty. Living conditions were characterized by overcrowding and congestion without basic amenities. Even cold water was to be bought in special booths. A room in a communal flat¹² or a place in a barrack (usually 15–20 people lived in a room), long queues to buy bread that used up several hours every day, and lack of essential goods completed the daily life of ordinary Soviet people.

¹² A flat in which kitchen and toilet facilities are shared by a number of tenants, where in each room lived one or more family. It was connected with the overcrowding of soviet cities because of urbanization, centralization and flight of peasants from the countryside and system crisis of the Soviet society. In Arkhangelsk most of dwelling buildings were made of wood, which had a risk of fire from blast bombs during the war.

During the Soviet period inhabitants of all towns survived partly through the purchase and sale of their things at the flea market («tolkuchka»). Here you could meet peasants and intellectuals, workers and clerks, also people without definite occupation, as well as poor and disadvantaged former nobles trying to sell something from their wardrobe or everyday things to earn a living. Special shops existed in the period of Stalinism which sold property of people who had been repressed: everything from paintings and antiques to clothing, shoes and other daily use items. Children's things from the repressed families offered for sale looked especially distressing¹³.

The material conditions of the Soviet cities changed even more with the beginning of the Second World War. The beginning of the Soviet-Finnish war (November 1939) led to shortages in the food supply – shops were empty, people frantically buying essential goods. In response, the government raised the price on food items and essential goods, prohibited the sale of food to peasants from collective farms in the cities. The food crisis of 1939–1940 had led to the situation where the main objective of the population became to find a possibility of buying bread. Productivity of labor began to fall and there was a growth of employee turnover, mass absenteeism, refusal to work, and escape from the farms. Economic powerlessness of the government in relation to the crisis led to new repressions which were not effective because they did not improve the economic situation, but fostered the social tension in the society.

In the period of 1940 – the beginning of 1941 a series of strict laws was adopted. The decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on June 26, 1940 had as central point the transition to the 8-hour workday and 7-day workweek, which established criminal liability for lateness and absences, as well as the prohibition of transition of employees and workers from one enterprise to another if unauthorized by administration. Being 20 minutes late for work was equated with absence¹⁴.

In 1939–1940 the Second World War began, so food supply in the USSR became worse. The special «closed» trading for officers and commanders of the Red Army, the NKVD, workers and engineers of industrial enterprises of the military complex was introduced. Special state trading absorbed the main part of the food resources

¹³ Osokina E. "Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927–1941". Armonk, New York; London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. – 288 p.

¹⁴ Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "About transition to the 8-hour day, 7-day work week and the prohibition of unauthorized leaving of workers and employees from enterprises, organizations and institutions" // Bulletin of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR №28(91), 22.08.1940. The law was adopted at the 7th session of the USSR Supreme Soviet of the 1st convocation of August 7, 1940.

because the goods came from the general supply fund of the city or region. Self-supply of the local leadership was achieved at the expense of worsening food-supply of the rest of the city's population. Only a few percent of goods were intended for supply of other Soviet citizens in open state trade¹⁵.

The letters of the famous archaeologist, historian, geologist Vasiliy Smirnov (he lived in Arkhangelsk exile in 1931–1941) is the best illustration of economic situation in the town for the first period of the Second World War. He wrote in the letter to his brother on May 13, 1940: *«All thoughts are focused on the struggle for existence. The queues as a system are part of our life. Today I was number 9113 for sugar. One time in a few months, I bought 200 grams of oil. I forgot the taste of sausage and fish» ¹⁶. On June 2, 1940 he wrote in the next letter: <i>«When I passed the queue for fish in 4000 people, I noticed that about 30–40 % of the people were of school age»* ¹⁷. In October of 1940 he wrote: *«We have only one piece of news: black bread disappeared from the stores»* ¹⁸.

At the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 Arkhangelsk became a closed city being an international port and a strategic object for capturing by the enemy troops.

Thus, the USSR completed industrialization, centralization, equipment and rearmament in a short-term period before the Second World War by unlimited use of human resources. Millions of political prisoners served as free labor in the construction of roads, cities, worked in the industrial military complex, on plants, sawmills and extraction of metals and minerals. Peasants fled from ruined villages to join the army of workers in cities. Soviet people lived without basic comfort, human rights and freedoms. Newest samples of weapons were created, the Soviet army increased, but Soviet leadership could not competently dispose of the information coming from Soviet intelligence agents in Western countries. Outdated concepts of war in the top military leadership, underestimation of the Nazi threat, flawed policy of arms and the national economy, profound disorganization of the military structure of the USSR as a result of the repressions during the 1930s (which destroyed the staff of the army and exterminated the most part of the military

¹⁵ Osokina E. "Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927–1941". Armonk, New York; London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. – 288 p.

¹⁶ Smirnov V.I. Arkhangelsk in the beginning of 1930th (From the notes of exile's historian). Arkhangelsk. 2012. //www.doykov.1mcg.ru (14.11.2014)

¹⁷ Smirnov V.I. Arkhangelsk in the beginning of 1930th (From the notes of exile's historian). Arkhangelsk. 2012. //www.doykov.1mcg.ru (14.11.2014)

¹⁸ Smirnov V.I. Arkhangelsk in the beginning of 1930th (From the notes of exile's historian). Arkhangelsk. 2012. //www.doykov.1mcg.ru (14.11.2014)

experts) – these are the main causes of the defeat of the USSR at the beginning of the bloodiest war in the Soviet history, the Great Patriotic War.

First arrangements of Arkhangelsk authorities and reaction of residents at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War

The special strategic position of Arkhangelsk at the beginning of the Second World War largely determined the daily life of the city. According to the German plan, the Army Group "North" was to rapidly capture Murmansk and the Kirov railway and secure access to the line Arkhangelsk-Volga-Astrakhan. The position of Arkhangelsk at the mouth of the Northern Dvina River, 50 km from the White Sea had determined its value as an important transport hub. Lend-lease shipments and communications with the USSR's allies passed through Arkhangelsk. In addition, from the beginning of the war Arkhangelsk became the closest rear of the Karelian Front. This circumstance had determined its special role as a base of the defenders of the Republic of Karelia and the Soviet Arctic, the sailors of the Northern Fleet and the White Sea Flotilla. Thus, from the first days of war, Arkhangelsk became de facto a frontline city.

The war began for the inhabitants of Arkhangelsk at 12 am on June 22, 1941, when the radio sent the speech of the People's Commissar of the Foreign Affairs V. Molotov about the German invasion to the Soviet Union. In the first days of the Great Patriotic War people were not informed about the real situation at the front in order to avoid the panic. In reality the Soviet army suffered great losses, the German army occupied vast territories, thousands of people were sent to German captivity because the Order Defense by Stalin was given only 3 July 1941, almost two weeks after the Germans attacked. This great mistake of the leader of the Soviet Union and fear of responsibility in the Soviet Army Command cost millions of lives. But according to the Red Army command reports on the western borders of the USSR at that time nothing wrong was happening, "the enemy with heavy losses dropped to the border". Newspapers and radio mentioned only occasionally that in some areas the Germans achieved minor success.

The reaction of residents of Arkhangelsk at the beginning of the war was diverse. Most people preferred to believe in the quick victory of the Red Army according to the information of the propaganda-system. Optimism was prevalent, especially among young people. Older people, who remembered the hardships of the Civil War, rushed to stock up food and essential commodities. Most people in the rear believed that the war would end in the next few weeks. We can read in July 1941 in the diary

of resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky: "Juliana Sergeevna expressed a very optimistic view on the war today. She expects that by September the Germans will have been driven from the Soviet land. She told me that in response to my threat that in September with the onset of dark nights the Germans will fly to bomb the Isakogorsky railway junction and Sudostroy in Molotovsk"¹⁹.

From the first days of the war people had to stand in queues for many hours – often for a whole night – in order to get bread. Most of the essential goods disappeared from the shops. On June 30 the shortages of kerosene started in the city. That created long queues because kerosene was used by the residents of communal flats in the primus stoves for cooking and for lighting. By August the food was not enough, thousands of people stood in endless queues in the cold and darkness to buy some food. There was shortage of everything: bread, cereals, cabbage²⁰.

The Soviet distribution system failed constantly. Respondents recall this fact: "On the first day when the war started, I came to the store - no bread on the shelves! Here you live, so you know everyone - I call the saleswoman by name and ask: "When will there be bread?". "Do not know", she says. The stores lacked not only bread, but almost everything: salt, matches, etc. - the shelves were empty. Before the war, we lived - when you came into the store: bread, all sorts of cereals, everything was there. But from the beginning of the war there were constant queues in front of shops. One kilogram of bread was given per person - no matter what kind of family - all had to stand in line to get some bread"²¹.

The beginning of the war is described in written memoirs: "Arkhangelsk, a port city, was closed for entering as well as for leaving from the first day of the war. The city became impoverished, frowned. A breeze was walking through the empty stalls of the closed market. The food was strictly rationed according to card-norms. All necessary items were issued for people on the cards. And these meager rations we received with delay – the train with our products stuck on the tracks, overloaded by

¹⁹ From the diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky June 21, 1941–January 2, 1942 // War. The Captured Days of 1941–1942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 24

²⁰ The War. The Captured Days of 1941–1942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005. p. 7.

²¹ Interview with Tamara Shishkina (born 1927) was held at the place of residence of the informant in November 9, 2007, 15:45–19:20. Here and below, the interviewer is author of this article, Elizaveta Khatanzeyskaya.

military echelons. Food could be obtained only in the surrounding villages, only in exchange for things (usually for clothes)"22.

Due to the position of the city close to the frontline a strict military order was required. Therefore on 24 June 1941 the state of martial law was declared in Arkhangelsk²³. Curfew was introduced from midnight to 4.30 in the morning. The time of the operation of enterprises was set: retail, utilities, public office – up to 10 p.m., entertainment companies – up to 11 p.m. Exit and entry into the city without special permission were banned. A system of commandants was organized to control the order of movement of citizens. The number of police officers increased in the city. Hundreds of volunteers were involved to work for the protection of the order and propaganda²⁴.

Under the State policy citizens had to report to the police any suspicious events or persons. Suspected persons and those who had no permanent place or a residence registration, were subjected to detainment and arrest. A special paragraph of the law was directed against alarmists. This category implied people who stocked up products. During two days, from the 23rd to the 24th of June 1941, 36 people were arrested by the police in one of the districts of Arkhangelsk. They had bought up food and industrial goods in big quantities. A citizen Ch. was detained and 10.7 kg of sugar and five cans of food were confiscated. Citizen K. was detained for the purchase of stockings, and several persons were arrested for buying up bread and other products²⁵.

The food situation during the first period of Great Patriotic War (June 1941–winter 1942)

A certain contrast can be traced in the memoirs between the food situation before the war and after the war began. But many of the respondents said that at the beginning of the war (July-early August) there were small reserves of food and it was possible to buy something in the stores. Serious problems with food-supply began with the introduction of rationing cards (September 1, 1941). «...there was everything in the stores until August 1, because it was a general euphoria. Then I

²² Memories of Ruzskaya T. (1916–2006), recorded November 15, 2006, 9:00. Memoirs prepared for publication by the granddaughter of T. Ruzskaya, Mary Koroleva (http://www.world-war.ru/printer_689.html)

²³ State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region, Department documents the social and political history, Fund 296, Inventory 1, Document 908, Page 103; continue – SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 908, P. 103.

²⁴ Suprun M. Arkhangelsk during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. The dissertation research for the degree of Candidate of historical sciences. Arkhangelsk. 1984.

²⁵ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 70. P. 88.

tasted salmon for the first time, I had not eaten it before... Close to the fish shop there were huge barrels of fish, densely covered with flies: it was salt fish, mixed with ice as there were no refrigerators... cod was not in favor, people used to say that this fish is only good to feed dogs. Cod cost just pennies. Then in Arkhangelsk there was a perfect market at the corner of Pomorskaya street and the Embankment. Then there were about 200 thousand inhabitants, but there were cows, sheep, goats right in the city, and at the market you could buy everything you wanted. I talk about the prewar time; it may seem strange, it is the month of July, when the war started. This general euphoria led to... I did not know any family that stocked up the products... Who prevented people from storing sack of grain, for example? Nobody bought it. You could dry bread... But, everyone thought that the war was about to end soon"²⁶.

The following fact was confirmed several times in memoirs and interviews: "when we arrived in Arkhangelsk (June 1941), shops were full of caviar, salmon... only at the very beginning of the war - everything was in the shops, everything. Moreover, because no one stored food, everybody said: "We will bag an easy win over Germans!" 27.

The impression that nobody was stocking up reserves was connected not only with the naive conviction that the war would end soon, but also with the directive of central and local authorities, according to which people stocking up the reserves of food supplies, were defined as "alarmists" and "speculators." Thus, the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, called upon City Committee police and party activists to fight the panic-mongers, rumor-mongers and those who tried to stockpile food and buy a lot of food and industrial goods in the shops of the city²⁸.

The problem of food-supply is shown entirely different in the diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky. There is the diary entry from June 23, 1941: "Everywhere, in all stores of Arkhangelsk there are 200–300 persons queued up for black bread, and there is no white bread. There are queues even at closed shops, but the police do not allow people to stand close to shops, which are not opened yet."²⁹

²⁶ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant on September 26, 2008, 18:05–19:45.

²⁷ Interview with Vera Elfimova, born in 1928, held at the place of residence of the informant on December 12, 2007. 14:05–15:10.

²⁸ State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region, Department documents the social and political history, Fund 296, Inventory 1, Document 908, Page 103; continue – SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 70. P. 64

²⁹ From the diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky. June 21, 1941 – January 2, 1942 / / The War. The Captured Days of 1941–1942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 18

August 20, 1941 the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted a resolution: "On the introduction of rationing cards for bread, sugar and confectionery, in cities, work settlements and towns." Ration cards³⁰ for bread, sugar and confectionery³¹ were introduced in Arkhangelsk and Arkhangelsk region from September 1. The population was divided in the following categories to supply³²:

- The first category, i.e. workers, engineers and technical staff, employees and their dependents in the defense industry, rail and sea transport, buildings of the defense industry, railway construction, as well as workers, engineers and technicians employed in forestry and fishing industries engaged in production during the period of seasonal work in cities;
- The second category: workers, engineers and technical workers, employees and their dependents of other industries, transport and the national economy and the rest of the urban population, not included in the first category.

The following norms were established for the distribution of bread, sugar and confectionery products to rationing cards for one day per person from September 1941^{33} :

Table № 1

Category of	Bread		Sugar and confectionery	
population /			products	
goods	First	Second	First category	Second
	category	category		category
Workers,	800 gr.	600 gr.	800 gr.	600 gr.
engineers and				
technical workers				
Employees	500 gr.	400 gr.	600 gr.	600 gr.
Dependents	400 gr.	400 gr.	400 gr.	400 gr.
Children under 12	400 gr.	400 gr.	600 gr.	400 gr.

These norms were retained only for the first few weeks after the introduction of the card-system. Then they declined steadily. The establishment of the rationing card-

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³⁰ Card-system was introduced to soviet distribution in wartime to rationing the food and basic necessities. This was the norm of food for one day. The Soviet population bought food on cards during the 1941–1947.

³¹ The War. The Captured Days of 1941–91942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 9

³² SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 910, P. 43.

³³ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 910, P. 44.

system was associated with a number of specific features of everyday life, which were described in the interviews: "The card – it was a dirty gray piece of paper of such a format, approximately 10×15 centimeters. The cards were issued for bread, butter and fats, sugar, cereals. Almost always only bread was given. On the card was specified the month, type of category (student, worker, employee), the ration norm (how many grams) and coupons (mean number of days – 30, so 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) were indicated. The cards could be received in the house administration after presenting a passport or residence permit. So, it was necessary to be registered, to get food at one place, for only one day, and only in one shop."³⁴

The persons who had no residence permit had no right for food-supply. But in fact they received the smallest norm of supply as dependents. The situation with refugees was complicated because there were many of them in Arkhangelsk. They had left their homes in the occupied territories and often lacked not only documents of registration, but also identification documents. There were also several categories of the population of the city, for which the card-system became a big problem, in particular, disfranchised.

In the early days of the war there were shops for free trade of bread at higher prices in the center of Arkhangelsk. They sold bread without cards and of higher quality. Originally it was assumed that the trade was primarily high-grade products and sort of bread made of white flour³⁵. But it had never been in reality. In commercial grain stores bread had never been of higher quality than in other state stores, but it was really more expensive - this was one of measures of the Soviet Government to withdraw funds from the population. The respondents recalled this as follows: "The store was selling a loaf of bread per person - it reminded black clay - it was viscous, low-quality bread, perhaps with the addition of straw or something else. People had to join the queues from the evening to buy this bread in the early morning - they were staying outside during the night - shops were opened only in the morning. Everyone in the queue had a personal number. The number was written on the palm. I took a number for myself and my mother. Roll call was every two hours. If you were here and your own number was announced, so it was good. If you were not present - you were not standing there, so, you could not buy any bread. Such a person was excluded from the queue. My mom, frankly, had a little courage to stand

³⁴ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008, 18:05-19:45.

³⁵ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 911, P. 55.

all night. I stood in those queues and received the bread. A loaf of that bread cost 400 rubles. But... we ate it."³⁶

Buying bread in commercial stores was a necessity for the people. When bread rationing was drastically reduced or food was not brought to state stores, people had to buy the same products, but more expensive in commercial stores. For example, an entry from the diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk Philadelph Parshinsky from October 21, 1941: "Today I left the house only 5 minutes later than I did yesterday, and I was already 788th in queue for the commercial bread (and yesterday I was 204th). It was as cold as yesterday plus the wind from the east. At 6 a.m. it turned out that the policeman had mixed up all the numbers trying to disperse the queue many times. When people were counted again, I got number 315. That could hardly be a comfort, as there was no bread and nobody knew when it was going to be brought. If the bread is brought at 8 a.m. so I can buy some at 10a.m., perhaps. But what sort of bread it's going to be?" 37

The norms of rationing of meat, fish, fats, cereals, pasta and other essential items were introduced next. The following rules were established in Arkhangelsk on November 1, 1941^{38} :

Table № 2

Category of population / goods	Meat and	Fats	Cereals and
	fish		pasta
The workers and engineers of the defense	2,200	600	1,500
industry			
The rest of the workers and engineers in	1,800	400	1,200
industry, transport and communication			
Employees	1,200	300	800
Dependents	500	200	600
Children under 12	400	300	800

This norm was never met in reality. In addition, it decreased steadily. Usually norms of meat and fish were exchanged with soy products, peas, rarely – canned fish and

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³⁶ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008, 18:05–19:45.

 $^{^{37}}$ From the diary of a resident of the city of Arkhangelsk, Filadelf Parshinsky from June 21, 1941- to January 2, 1942 / / War. The Captured Days of 1941-1942. Diaries and documents. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 87-88.

³⁸ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 885, P. 55.

meat. During the most hungry time, in the winter of 1941–42, these norms were not realized at all – people could not buy any food even with cards.

The official meat-fish ration included sausage, fish-products, herring, meat and canned fish. Milk, milk products, and cheese comprised the norm of fats. In accordance with this decision, distribution of eggs for children in need of a diet was realized by special coupons. Distribution of meat and fish dishes in the canteens of enterprises and institutions was carried out according to the established norms of meat and fish. Meat and fish dishes in restaurants, outdoor dining, railway buffets were distributed without the cards, but with a 200% mark-up (extra charge)³⁹.

Vivid memories were retained about those meager rations: "Card-system was introduced. It was a terrible thing: you need to find the time to get this bread... Of course, it was not enough for some people... What is not enough? I remember well the first norms: a working card – 800 grams, employees – 600 gr., students – 600, and the last category, the smallest – 400 gr. As for the cereals, you could come to the canteens and have some soup here, so, cut out the coupons for the rump and feat... Sometimes, you could buy some candies – for the norms of sugar (400 gr. a month). In the beginning there were canteens where you could buy a bowl of some soup, some bread was given per person and nothing else ... but it lasted a month or two then was all over quickly."⁴⁰

Respondents remember that from October 1941 it was impossible to buy any of these products in state stores even with cards. Exceptions were stores for government officials and military personnel and their families⁴¹.

Since the 1930s it was possible to buy food at the market. People living in surrounding villages, near Arkhangelsk, or right in the town (those who had a kitchen garden) traded there. People met this situation by selling their belongings at the "flea market" («tolkuchka») and using the money to buy food at the town market. In some periods during the war you could buy milk here, canned food, bread, potatoes, vegetables and food-cards. But it all cost ten times more than in state stores. People were forced to sell furniture, jewelry, icons, pictures, clothes, only to buy some food. They could also buy their own daily norms of bread. "*To buy my norm of bread in a state store I had to sell my norm of bread at the food-market because I had no money. I remember my norm of bread cost 25 rubles. At the market*

³⁹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 196. I. 1. D. 911. P. 147-148.

⁴⁰ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008, 18:05–19:45.

⁴¹ Smirnova Tatiana. My memories. Arkhangelsk 1935–1945., P. 120.

all products were 10 times more expensive... So I had about 250 rubles and could buy my bread in a state store" 42 .

Town factories had kitchen gardens where workers could grow vegetables on their own to save themselves from starvation. These products were used in the canteens of factories, enterprises and institutions to improve the nutrition of the employees. They were not counted in the norms of cards⁴³.

In reality, not all groups of the population were equally affected by hunger. The Soviet system proclaimed equality, but, in fact, it always deviated from its principles. "Arkhangelsk, of course, was hungry, but hungry in a peculiar way. There were people who were starving and people who had the opportunity to eat. For example, the market continued to work. That I remember well, I attended medical school from 1941, and when I received an increased stipend, about 280 rubles, we went to the market. I remember that shaneshka⁴⁴ cost 25 rubles, a glass of warm milk cost 15 p. We ate two shaneshkas there... So, there were products in the city. And if you had the money, you could buy some food"⁴⁵.

In October-November 1941 it became apparent that food-supply in Arkhangelsk was very bad – the system of state support of the population had failed constantly; shops and canteens could not accommodate the huge queues. Almost all food and consumer goods disappeared from the shops, as well as inexpensive clothing and cloth. "Famine started in the city. Our institute's canteen served "empty" soup – water with a piece of cod and porridge without butter. I began to weaken; during the short path to the institute I had a rest several times. The bad news reached us from the front: there were severe fights, heavy losses."⁴⁶

By the end of 1941–the beginning of 1942 the food situation reached its logical culmination. In the diary of F.N. Parshinsky we find a story about the decision to eat the meat of cats because he could not buy anything in the shops and had no money to buy any food in the market. November 22, 1941 he wrote: "*Today at 12:00 I strangled my cat with a string*". November 23: "*I washed the liver, lungs, heart and*"

⁴² Interview with Nina Sablina (1926) held at the place of residence of the informant in April 3, 2008, 13:05–16:04.

⁴³ SAAR DDSPH, F. 196. I. 1. D. 911. P. 148.

⁴⁴ Traditional food of the Russian North, it resembles pies.

⁴⁵ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008, 18:05–19:45.

⁴⁶ Memories of Tatiana Ruzskaya (1916–2006), recorded November 15, 2006, at 9:00. Memoirs were prepared for publication by the granddaughter of T. Ruzskaya, Mary Koroleva (http://www.world-war.ru/printer_689.html)

kidneys, then folded it into a small saucepan. I will cook it. And eat. Lung and heart I will give to the other cat - let it eat while still alive."⁴⁷

This was not the only case of its kind in Arkhangelsk. In the secret protocol № 146 from meetings of local authorities of April 2, 1942 were recorded detailed analyses of similar cases: "The data of preliminary investigation confirmed that K. in cooperation with the former kulak⁴⁸ Ch. killed and ate cats and dogs for the purposes of counter-revolutionary propaganda. The chief of fire protection of the enterprise knew about these crimes, was himself involved in the use of the meat of dogs, and gave the criminals small rifles"⁴⁹.

Those people were arrested for counterrevolutionary activities and subjected to criminal liability. The chief of fire protection was involved in a criminal case as an accomplice⁵⁰. So this attempt of Soviet people to survive was qualified as counterrevolutionary propaganda, and increasingly people were brought to trial. At the same time, the court assessed two years of prison to professional shady dealers who were stealing bread and cards mainly from children⁵¹.

According to eyewitnesses, in March–April 1942 the dead were carried to all the cemeteries of Arkhangelsk, but there was no time to bury them – there were too many of them. The funeral team of the town consisted of 27 workers; they dug pits and trenches where they buried the dead. In the central cemetery of town and the cemetery on the Bull, the dead were often piled up and lay on the snow⁵².

In the first war winter and spring, the hospitals in Arkhangelsk – 1st Municipal Hospital Semashko and Infectious Diseases – were crowded with people. In March 1942 in Arkhangelsk there were recorded 6,655 people suffering from edemas due to protein deficiency, 591 pellagra cases, 16,522 of scurvy, 1,943 of rickets, 907 of

⁴⁷ Diary of a resident of Arkhangelsk, F.N. Parshinsky. June 21, 1941 - January 2, 1942 / / War. The Captured Days of 1941–1942. Diaries and documents published from the found of State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 111–112

⁴⁸ Kulak is the pejorative name for the category of the rural population of the Soviet Union which was repressed during the period of collectivization (1929–1933). Before the revolution of 1917 and in the beginning of the 1920s they provided for the needs of the population of the whole country in the agricultural production. The property of kulaks was taken away to collectives farms (kolkhoz) by the Soviet state. Most of them died together with their families in camps or were deported to unpopulated regions of the country in the extreme North without any property and personal things. That led to the destruction of agriculture and famine in the countryside of the USSR. Some of them managed to escape to the cities, where they were persecuted by Soviet authorities as enemies of people and the power. In fact, «they were the most hardworking and savvy peasants» – wrote Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his novel «The Gulag Archipelago».

⁴⁹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 1172, P. 36.

⁵⁰ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296, I. 1, D. 1172, P. 37.

⁵¹ Tatiana Smirnova. My memories. Arkhangelsk 1935–1945., P.122.

⁵² Sukhanovsky A. 1942. Arkhangelsk. Famine ... // Northern Komsomolets. 1992. May, 29, p. 6.

night blindness. The cause of all these diseases was exhaustion and lack of vitamins and other nutrition.

One of the sources of information about deaths during in wartime Arkhangelsk is the book of registration of graves in the Isakogorsky cemetery of 1942–43. The number of entries in one day sometimes reached 100⁵³, and this was just one of the town's cemeteries. Most of the respondents confirmed in their memoirs-interviews the fact that a terrible famine peaked in the winter and spring of 1941–1942: "*I saw personally how people fell straight down onto the snow in winter. My friends died of starvation. My husband's mother died of starvation*"⁵⁴.

The respondents explained differently the causes of this terrible famine which began in the autumn of 1941 and continued during the whole war. One believed that the cause of hunger was the Nazis' bombing of warehouses on the left bank of the Northern Dvina, so that much of the food supply was burned, others said most of the food was sent to the front. However, one respondent said: "Arkhangelsk was hungry not because it was blocked, nor because warehouses were bombed... but due to the bad organization work of the city's authorities: the local officials could not organize supply and solve many other problems – many of them were dismissed. My father was the secretary of the City Council. He had to fix all those problems"55.

In confirmation of this view there are several archival documents from which we can conclude that the mortality problem was fundamentally related to the organization of power. The problems were mainly in the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet system. Food supplies were carried out in wartime, but not distributed evenly and efficiently. In the Soviet system some categories of the population had a special supply:

- Families of officers of the Soviet Army. But if an officer was taken prisoner or deserted, his family was deprived of food rations and considered "enemy of the people", and could even be subjected to persecution (arrest, expulsion). Anyway, in wartime that meant death from starvation;
- Employees of the NKVD (secret services), the highest civil party servants and their families. State bureaucracy, especially the punitive apparatus, increased during wartime. Their rations are still classified;

⁵³ Sanakina T. The documents of the State Archive of Arkhangelsk about the situation of the inhabitants in Arkhangelsk during the Great Patriotic War // Defenders of the Fatherland. 2006. p. 220.

⁵⁴ Interview with Vera Elfimova, born in 1928, held at the place of residence of the informant in December 12, 2007. 14:05–15:10.

⁵⁵ Interview with Yuri Ugarov, born in 1928, took place in the workplace informant at Trinity Avenue 95, (College of Culture), the Room № 104, 2008 May 3, 10:35–11:25.

- Workers and engineers of military enterprises;
- Sailors and employees of the infrastructure of the port of Arkhangelsk;
- Employees of the burial brigade there was an urgent need to bury the many dead.

The whole life of the Soviet state was regulated by secret decrees and orders, so, it is really difficult to trace the legislative base of changes in the food-situation and food-supply of certain categories of the Soviet population.

According to eyewitnesses, during the war there were people who could exchange the products of their rations for jewelry, antique furniture, clothing, which all the years of Soviet power was deficient, etc. Particularly noticeable was a category of people who wanted to enrich themselves – they bought jewelry and expensive antiques for small pieces of bread, frozen potatoes or carpenter's glue, which was also used as food. After the war, those people became very rich, having made money on someone's misfortune. It looked particularly shocking compared to hunger and devastation.

Problems of supply of the population with vegetables produced in Arkhangelsk region

Arkhangelsk region never was a grain delivery district for the country. But before the Soviet period this territory could meet the food needs of the population through individual farmers and local production, as well as traditional Pomor handicrafts industry, hunting, game-shooting, fishing, seasonal work (carpentry and roofing workmanship, work in plants and factories). After the establishment of the Soviet power Arkhangelsk region became one of the poorest regions of the country, it was only the «All-Union Sawmill» and a currency source for the Soviet system (timber exports gave a huge income to the USSR). However, the Soviet government established delivery norms for bread and other agricultural products from all collective and individual farms for the Soviet state.

One of the main problems of food supply in the first months of the war was the problem of staff and labor shortages. The most of working-age population went to the front, so the main work fell to women and children. Women, adolescents and children that remained in the rear could not fully replace the manpower of the male population that went to the front. In September 1941 the harvesting of forage and all crops in the collective farms failed. On September 21, 1941 only 30% of potatoes

were harvested, 20% of vegetables, 44% of grain. So potatoes and other vegetables could be under snow⁵⁶.

In order to solve the problems of wartime the system of labor front was introduced. All the able-bodied population was brought to the harvesting, but not to the detriment of public institutions and enterprises. Increased payments to collective farmers were promised. Students of grades 8 to 10 of secondary schools also were sent to harvest works in the collective state farms until the end of the harvest, as well as to the logging enterprises and sawmills⁵⁷.

In early October 1941 the situation with the grain procurements in the Arkhangelsk region was summarized by the central authorities: "deadlines of the bread campaign were broken, and grain procurements failed miserably." Responsibility for grain harvesting was placed on the secretaries of Party Committees in each district of the Arkhangelsk region. Officials of these agencies were exempted from all other work to implement the plan. Prior to December 1, 1941 the increased payment for collective farmers was introduced. It was forbidden to mobilize and divert cars to work not connected with grain harvesting58.

Due to bureaucratic problems trade organizations and canteens of the city were not able to accept fresh vegetables from the collective farms. State farms were forced to sell vegetables to other organizations outside the city⁵⁹.

However, the Soviet bureaucracy had grown continuously. On December 10, 1941 the post of Secretary for Trade and public catering, staff of manager and instructor in departments in the City Committee of Party were introduced in the city⁶⁰.

In December 1941 a terrible situation with collecting of the most important agricultural products (especially milk, wool, hay, potatoes, vegetables, flax, and cereal crops) took place. Harvested potatoes and vegetables could not be transported from the field-farms to Arkhangelsk due to lack of transport⁶¹. City officials sent to the front the most of vegetables that were brought from collective farms to Arkhangelsk. Moreover, there was a significant difference between the information in planning and reporting documents and real usage of vegetables for the population. Those problems continued during the whole time of the Great

⁵⁶ Interview with Yuri Ugarov, born in 1928, took place in the workplace informant at Trinity Avenue 95, (College of Culture) Room № 104, May 3, 2008, 10:35–11:25.

⁵⁷ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 1. P. 73

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 102

⁵⁹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 25. P. 70

⁶⁰ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 1. P. 138

⁶¹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 416. P. 43

Patriotic War. Archival documents of archive recorded the same situation with supplies of vegetables and local agricultural products in 1943–1944⁶².

That again shows the ineffectiveness of the totalitarian system in emergency situations. One of the most important reasons of great problems with food-supply during the war was bad operation of the Soviet bureaucracy and lack of coordination between local and central authorities. Soviet bureaucracy could not be reorganized and rebuilt for extreme conditions of war. So, people of many cities of the Soviet Union were doomed to starve.

The attempts of the city authorities to prevent starvation

Due to the beginning of wartime Soviet researchers attempted to expand the resource base of food in starving Arkhangelsk, particularly, to find alternative sources of food. So, expeditions to the islands of the White Sea and Novaya Zemlya archipelago were organized to pick up guillemot eggs and meat, hunt seals, catch mussels and seaweed. In June 1942 about 150 students of colleges and high schools were sent on such an expedition⁶³.

To harvest seaweed other special expeditions were organized on July 15, 1942: about 143 people gave good results⁶⁴. Already in 1942 the table had a new range of dishes: baked kelp, kelp stew, meatballs from kelp, kelp soup. Public tasting of new dishes was arranged⁶⁵.

Fishing expeditions to Novaya Zemlya archipelago were organized in 1943. Production targets were fish (cod, trout), sea animals (sea hare, beluga), bird eggs and meat, and also fur. Students of schools and colleges had to hunt prey, pick cranberries, mushrooms and berries, and gather pine needles, nettles and sorrel⁶⁶.

Due to the difficult food situation the city authorities allowed to use the land of the city for individual gardens and private plots in the spring of 1942. This measure was taken to prevent a recurrence of the food situation of the winter and spring 1941–1942. According to the recollections of the respondents, all the land free of buildings was ploughed for kitchen-gardens: "*Here, in town, every available piece of*

⁶² SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 276. P. 136–283.

⁶³ SAAR, F. 1740. I. 6. D. 16. P. 307

⁶⁴ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 152. P. 13

⁶⁵ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 189. P. 58

⁶⁶ SAAR DDSPH, F. 296. I. 6. D. 1368. P. 56

land was dug up. The area around the theater was dug up too, every piece was. We had a plot near the railway line - it was not soil, but coal, solid coal... "67.

According to the official data, in the spring of 1942 the sale norms for bread were partially reconsidered⁶⁸:

Table № 3

Category of population	Bread
The workers and engineers of the first category	800
The rest of the workers and engineers of the second category	
Employees of the first category	500
Employees of the second category	
Children under 12	400
Dependents	200

All those arrangements led to some improvement of the food situation and reduced the mortality in Arkhangelsk in 1943–1944. However, according to official data during the years 1941-1944 about 38,000 people died in the town, half of them died in 1942^{69} .

Living conditions and health-care problems in the city during the war

In those years, Arkhangelsk stood on a peat bog. Farther from the bank of the Northern Dvina, the peat was closer to its natural state – impassable swamps. The city and worker settlements were surrounded by those wetlands. Such conditions had a negative effect for water conduit, telephone line, sewerage, cable network, etc.

In 1940 the population of Arkhangelsk was 283 thousand people. Average living space for one person was about 4 m², but most of the population continued to live in the area of 1.6–3 m² per person⁷⁰. Mostly people lived in huts and barracks without basic sanitary service for a long time. Separate (individual for families) apartments with all conveniences were uncommon. Usually only Party authorities and government officials lived in them.

⁶⁷ Interview with Lev Varfolomeev, born in 1926, held at the place of residence in July 30, 2008 14:30–15:56

⁶⁸ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 232. P. 58

⁶⁹ Suprun M. Arkhangelsk in War // Dvina. № 1. P. 3

⁷⁰ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 230. P. 5.

In 1940 Arkhangelsk had four municipal baths for 878 places⁷¹. It was not enough for the whole city, which caused permanent queues and unsanitary condition of the premises. In wartime this problem was worsened because of destroyed infrastructure, which led to pediculosis and typhus.

In 1941 only 43% of the population of Arkhangelsk used filtered tap water, 38% of them lived in two central city districts which were covered by water supply almost completely, while only 5% lived in workers' settlements⁷². This is one of the most important causes of typhoid fever. In wartime this problem was aggravated by famine.

In prewar Arkhangelsk there were 15 hospitals with 2,678 beds, 30 clinics and outpatient hospital departments with 207 physicians in staff, 52 crèches for 3,810 beds. At the beginning of the war in 1941 the network of medical institutions was reduced due to the transfer of buildings and medical equipment to military hospitals. A significant number of medical personnel went to the front. After mobilization 19 doctors went to the front. In 1941, the city had the following network of health care institutions: 14 hospitals with 2,440 beds, 3 TB sanatoriums, 3 maternity hospitals, 5 polyclinics, 25 outpatient clinics, 6 health care centers, 22 medical assistant points, 4 first-aid stations, 10 consultations for children and 60 crèches for 5,238 beds. In those institutions worked 126 doctors from 491 medical staff⁷³.

In 1941–1942 the Medical Institute of Arkhangelsk organized premature graduation of medical students to compensate for the deficiency of medical personnel⁷⁴. However, quality of medical care declined.

In 1942, the hospital network diminished even further: the tuberculosis hospital was damaged during a German raid and was moved to one of the districts of Arkhangelsk region. However, the number of beds in comparison with 1941 was not reduced, and even increased: if in 1941 there were 14 hospitals with 2,440 beds, in 1942 – 13 hospitals with 2,550 beds⁷⁵.

At the beginning of the war the level of infectious diseases increased dramatically. Especially the number of cases of typhoid fever, dysentery, typhus

⁷¹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 16, P. 32.

⁷² SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 232. P. 15

⁷³ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 16, PP. 51–53.

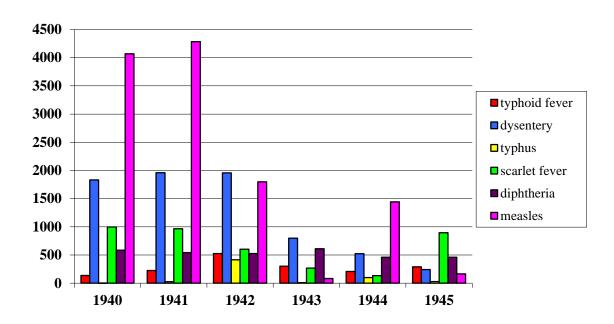
 $^{^{74}}$ Maria Pickel. Memoirs of life // From the personal archive of Tatiana Ivanova. Arkhangelsk. 2005. P. 56

⁷⁵ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 154, P. 10.

(spotted fever), and measles increased. Morbidity due to the deterioration of sanitary conditions in the city, massive population migrations and deteriorating sanitary regime of food enterprises as well as poor conditions of the water supply network, lack of sanitary treatment and unhygienic conditions in the hostels of worker settlements lead to such heightening of the level of infectious diseases⁷⁶ –see diagram N 1.

Diagram № 1

The level of infectious diseases in wartime Arkhangelsk



The diagram shows that in 1942 the incidence of typhus significantly increased, due to delivery of patients during the evacuation from other regions and redeployment of new batches of prisoners to Arkhangelsk region (70% of all cases there were newcomers, while local people accounted for about 30% of all cases)⁷⁷.

City hospitals were overcrowded also by people who suffered from protein deficiency edema, scurvy, pellagra, malnutrition, decline of cardiac activity due to malnutrition.

During the war in Arkhangelsk the birth rate plummeted sharply and mortality increased. Peaked in 1942, the death rate "overrode" the birth rate almost 3 times.

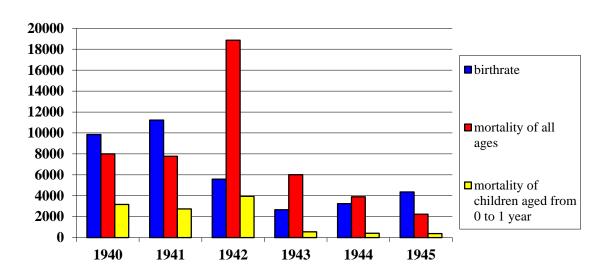
⁷⁶ SAAR, F. 32, I. 1, D. 81, PP. 53 – 53.

⁷⁷ SAAR, F. 32. I. 1. D. 81, P. 1.

Positive population growth was achieved only at the end of the war, in 1945 – see diagram N 2.

Diagram № 2

Birth rate and mortality in wartime Arkhangelsk



In addition, it was extremely difficult to provide medical institutions with all the necessary items, in particular, fuel and food. Here is an extract from the letter of Professor Nikitin, Head of the Infectious Diseases Clinic. *«The situation in the Infectious Diseases Hospital is very heavy, so the fight with infectious diseases, especially typhus, is extremely difficult.* An outbreak of typhus, intestinal infections (typhoid fever and dysentery) and childhood infections (scarlet fever and diphtheria) may happen because of the extremely poor heating system of the Infectious Diseases hospital. Barracks of the hospital have no supply of wood, so, it was impossible to have a bath for the sick people, whereas patients often came with lice and processing them is extremely difficult. The hospital ward is frosty, that is why patients often get such complications as pneumonia. In some spaces (for example, in the emergency room) it was so cold that the patients could not be placed there. The hospital staff is busy cutting firewood; as a result the quality of nursing became worse. In the pediatric infectious building the temperature is 8–9 ° C, that is why children with diphtheria and scarlet fever have colds and dangerous complications»⁷⁸.

The problem of heating was difficult to regulate for bureaucratic problems. The Infectious Diseases Hospital had no transportation system and not even its own

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⁷⁸ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 154, P. 4.

laundry (it used the one that belonged to the First City Hospital). The hospital barracks had no water, so medical professionals presupposed an increase in cases of typhus and intestinal infections with the onset of warm weather.

In 1942 the whole heating system of the Central policlinic was frozen and completely removed. An auricular clinic was placed in this building and did not work, neither did the station of blood transfusion. The blood transfusion station started working again only in January 1943⁷⁹.

Heads of clinics could not be engaged in medical work because they had to solve other problems: collecting firewood for fuel, finding transport, catering patients. The First City Hospital at that period had no firewood due to the lack of transport. The staff of medical institutions had to "carry the wood by themselves" as its supply was not organized. So, the staff of city hospitals were engaged in hard physical labor, were malnourished and, as a result, – exhausted.

The First City Hospital faced another problem described in the report of hospital administration to the City Party office: «To the hospital emergency room, where patients are taken for purposes of treatment in any of the departments of the hospital clinic, every day people, who were released from the camp or prison come. Also, every day from six to ten people were brought, sometimes they were half-dead with frostbitten hands and feet. There were cases when they had been removed from the ambulance and after a short time they died right in the waiting room on the floor. So, on February 3, 1942 six people died. Support staff could not work in the emergency room. The smell is impossible. Every day there were 17–25 of such patients, and more in the waiting room. They are not subjected to appropriate sanitation and so each of them can have lice, and therefore there is a risk of other patients being infected»⁸⁰.

During the war prisoners continued to work in the city, there were four camps. But the organization of health care for prisoners in the most difficult period of the war was impossible due to the lack of doctors, so, they had to get medical care together with other patients.

The medical staff of the wartime city was starving. This is an excerpt from a letter of professor Nikitin, the head of the Infectious Diseases Hospital to the city authorities: «Some people from the medical staff could not walk; some even were to be put to the hospital because of exhaustion, bleeding and swelling of scorbutic origin, so they fell off completely. Doctors were attached mainly to the dining room N_2 6,

⁷⁹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 154, P. 5.

⁸⁰ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 189, P. 52.

which served only soup from flour and tea. With such a starvation diet weight loss, emaciation and edema happened»⁸¹.

From the beginning of the war in Arkhangelsk there was shortage of medicines. It was decided to make some medicinal substances from local raw materials. At the Chair of General Chemistry of Arkhangelsk Medical Institute they began to produce urotropin, iodide calcium, sodium iodide and chloroform, and the brewery started producing calcium chloride and glucose. In the early days of the war many educators were mobilized to the front. The rest of the teachers at the institute combined educational work with great organizational and advisory work in the military district hospitals and other health-care facilities.

Because of the war medical personnel, especially doctors for military and civilian health care system were required. Higher education institutions in the beginning of the war prematurely released young doctors. The Medical School then transferred to the accelerated training time, which allowed increasing the number of health care workers. During the war the Medical Institute trained 906 doctors: 196 doctors in June 1941, 208 in December 1941, 184 in 1942, 165 in 1943, and 153 doctors in 1944. But not all of the graduates stayed in Arkhangelsk: 300 went to the front⁸².

The first wartime winter was very difficult for Arkhangelsk. Many patients died from constant malnutrition and vitamin deficiency. Professor A. Tartars, Associate Professor A. Vedrinskiy and employee of the algal laboratory K. Gemp began to explore the possibility of using food algae. On the agar plant a special workshop for processing algae was set up, they developed sausage meat with the addition of seaweeds. Products with added algae were widely used in the catering system of the city. Since the autumn of 1941 Medical Institute researchers began to conduct a comprehensive study of avitaminosis, including scurvy, pellagra and malnutrition. At the same time they found means of prevention and treatment of these diseases⁸³.

The Chair of General therapy Professor M. Turkeltaub studied water exchange, cardiac change caused by beriberi, depletion and "edematous" disease. Employees of the Department of Pediatrics developed preventative methods against eating disorders caused by lack of food and treatment methods for severe malnutrition and rickets in children who had been evacuated from the siege of Leningrad. Under the direction of Professor I. Matusis at the Department of Biochemistry a method of obtaining vitamin "C" from pine needles and determining its daily requirement for

⁸¹ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 81, P. 5.

⁸² SAAR, F. 32, I. 1, D. 40, P. 49.

⁸³ SAAR, F. 32, I. 1, D. 40, P. 52.

adults and children was developed. Special units for the manufacture of vitamin infusion pine extract, and based on them – "vitamin shops" were set up for food companies, institutions and hospitals. Professors G. Orlov and S. Elizarovsky developed a way of linking the damaged nerves with special nerve grafts, which was approved by the chief surgeon of the Soviet Army N. Burdenko⁸⁴.

Despite the difficult operating conditions doctors and medical staff of Arkhangelsk provided timely and quality care to the population of the city, performed complex operations in hospitals, made scientific discoveries, trained new medical staff. Truly gigantic work on prevention and treatment of epidemics of infectious diseases led to the elimination of the morbidity among residents of some infectious diseases by the end of the war. Thus, during the Great Patriotic War, the health workers carried out an important task of ensuring the normal condition of sanitary – epidemiological state of front and rear.

The population's basic skills and ways of survival in wartime Arkhangelsk

From the beginning of the war the public supply system was not able to feed the population of the Soviet Union and, in particular, Arkhangelsk. So, a system of self-supply, diverse set of skills and ways of survival spread in the extreme conditions of everyday life of the Soviet society, starting from the legal means of survival, which were accepted by the state, to criminal acts.

Along with the card system of food supply, it was possible to buy products at higher prices in commercial stores. There were the so-called Torgsin where in exchange for gold, silver and other valuables, residents of town could buy food products, even the delicacies⁸⁵. So, it was one more measure to withdraw values from the population on the part of the Soviet system.

Due to the continuation of the war and crisis of food supply, the number of crimes related to stealing of the food and cards increased. In 1942 the cases of theft of food cards and goods, and fraud in the shops of the city were as spread as the self-supply and unlawful issuance of ration cards⁸⁶. For example, in bakery N 2 of the Isakogorsky district of Arkhangelsk in February 1942 a group of 12 people that distributed bread unlawfully from the bakery was eliminated. The stolen bread was

⁸⁴ SAAR, F. 32, I. 1, D. 40, P. 53 - 54.

⁸⁵ War. The Captured Days of 1941-1942. Diaries and documents, published from the found of State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region. Arkhangelsk. 2005, p. 10

⁸⁶ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 264. P. 85–86.

sold by workers of dining room \mathbb{N} 17, without cards. The stolen bread was also sent for sale to the shops and stalls of the city. The organizers of this group were convicted to imprisonment for terms from five to seven years with confiscation of property. Other defendants received appropriate penalties⁸⁷.

This case was not unique. The official Soviet system of food-supply had its downside – a great system of "self-supply" by those who were engaged in trade and food services – also known as «speculacia». The universal value in those conditions was bread. The cost of bread and other food products multiplied. Therefore, the system of exchange of products for valuable things spread in the wartime. This is reflected in the memories of respondents: "It was a system of exchange of products. There was a certain category of people who tried to buy something, changing for things. So, we had things, they gave us some food. If this to be converted to money ratios, they had a profit 1:100"88.

Witnesses of the terrible events of the war years preferred to remain silent about the fact that individuals amassed big capital, when other people starved to death. Perhaps it was painful for relatives and friends to remember the victims of hunger, and may be they did not want to focus attention on injustice once again. They talked about everyday cases of inequality, which was apparent: "For example, a woman lived near our house. Our house was N_2 43, and then N_2 45, and her window was just in front of our house. First, they lived in one room. Then, I do not know why, but she got two rooms. I remember that they were girls, but they were older than me ... 17-18 years. They were very well dressed. Their mother worked in a store. It was really good for ordinary people, wasn't it?" 189.

In addition to speculacia and self-supply («quiet theft»), there were other ways of getting rich in wartime, for example, by robbery and fraud. It was not difficult to take away the cards or bread from a weakened old man or a child. Fraudsters could promise their victim immediate (without long hours of standing in queues on the cold street) exchange of his card for good white bread. One of such blatant case of fraud during the war was described by one of the victims – now it is just a part of memoirs of an eyewitness, but then there was a real danger to die for the whole family. "It was a summer day. I took the bread in the store and put it in a linen bag. Then I noticed that a girl looked at me and smiled. She came up to me. She said that

⁸⁷ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 191. P. 17

⁸⁸ Interview with Henry Shechtman, born in 1925, held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008, 18:05–19:45.

⁸⁹ Interview with Eugenia Suhih, born in 1935, held at the workplace informant in March 10, 2008, 11:35–14:22.

she was familiar with my mom and she could exchange my card for white bread. She offers to do it right now, if I would go with her. I agreed. We passed my house. We reached the building of the clinic on the corner of Lomonosov and Vinogradov streets. This building was one of the biggest in the city then. We went into the building – through one of the entrances. As we passed a few meters into the building, she took my bag of bread, asked whether the card was in it, and told me to wait for her. I was waiting for a long time. I began to cry, I ran in the direction where she went. But the building was like a labyrinth. Some women asked me what happened. Finally, I came home. We reported to the police. It turned out that I didn't remember her face. When I looked at her previously, she stared at me, it confused me and I moved my eyes to her big glass brooch. I walked away with a policeman. He left me to sit on the wooden jetty in the street and watch one house. It all was in vain. But, perhaps, a month later we received a subpoena. I went with my mother. The crook was caught by a boy who suffered like me. He understood that the police wouldn't be able to find the crook, so, he began to visit at the shop where this person came up to him every day.

In the courtroom there were many victims. All of them suffered one way - the crook lured the cards away. The judge or someone from the court read a long list of persons who were robbed by this woman. A lot of people did not come. The Court held fast. The defendant didn't say anything. She was sentenced to two years imprisonment. No one got back the cards and money. In the court they told us that during the search they found nothing. I still cannot understand it. She physically could not eat so much bread. Maybe, she sold cards? But then it must be the money. Why only two years? The loss of cards was equivalent to death. My mother worked so hard for us to survive. Did all the victims survive? Why so many of them had not come to court?" 90.

The fact that the crook had no money, no cards, no bread at the time of the search could indicate that it was an organized initiative. It is also clear that the severity of the crime does not appropriate to the punishment: few years of prison one could get for some words against the Soviet power, but for those crimes that doomed people to starve and death – only two years. Similar cases of theft of bread and cards from children in Arkhangelsk are found in the memoirs of the respondents⁹¹.

 $^{^{90}}$ Smirnova Tatiana. My memories. Arkhangelsk 1935–1945 // From the funds of Arkhangelsk's Scientific Regional Library, P.122.

⁹¹ Interview with Tamara Shergina (born in 1934) held at the place of residence of the informant in September 26, 2008 17:00–18:05.

The food situation during adaptation to war conditions in the city (1943-1945)

In 1943 situation with food was improved. In addition to survival skills of the population in everyday life, the situation of food supply improved a little. Food-sale norms were corrected in accordance with availability of food in warehouses. On March 16, 1943 the norms were as follows⁹²:

Table № 4

Category of population	Meat and	Cereals
	fish	and pasta
The workers and engineers of the first category	1,200	600
The rest of the workers and engineers of the second category	1,200	600
Employees of the first category	900	400
Employees of the second category	900	400
Children under 12	400	400
Dependents	400	200

However, the mortality rate remained very high, especially among children. In reference to the reported deaths from the Civil Registry Office there were 23 medical diagnoses of "exhaustion" in the fourth quarter of 1944. It was in October–December 1944 when the severity of the food crisis was lowered according to the official version⁹³.

By 1944 there was some improvement in food service, mainly due to increased fishing and introduction of new food resources (seal oil and meat, eggs of guillemots, seaweed, etc.). But the situation with the harvesting of potatoes and vegetables continued to be difficult⁹⁴.

In 1944 the work of canteens was improved a little: rooms and tables were repaired, canteens were provided with crockery, service and food preparation was improved, a minimum in the range of dishes was introduced. Tables for increased and dietary nourishment were introduced in sawmills and other important industries. 2–3 meals a day were organized for the workers in the leading workshops. In the city, canteens for the teachers were organized, as well as a diet canteen for adults (for 700–750 people), a diet canteen for children (for 700 people),

⁹² SAAR, F. 2063. I. 1. D. 1509. P. 93

⁹³ SAAR DDSPH, F. 834. I. 2. D. 247

⁹⁴ Ibid. D. 245, P. 17

a dining room for adult tuberculosis patients (for 250 people), and for tubercular children (200 people). A special room was organized for the Disabled of the Great Patriotic War; besides, there were closed dining rooms for security service members⁹⁵.

By the end of the war there was some adaptation to the extreme conditions of life in the military routine. Residents of the city had found a few ways to avoid starving to death: the creation of vegetable gardens, use of unconventional resources in food (meat and seal oil, seaweed, cats, dogs, crows, etc.), various types of self-supply (theft of products in the stores and canteens), sale of property and exchange for the food, robbery, theft of cards, etc. These ways allowed the survival of part of the population of the city.

The most important from our point of view is the understanding of the moral situation in the society of this time. It is possible, though memories saved real feelings and emotions of people of wartime. This is part of memoirs of Maria Pickel, a resident of Arkhangelsk in the 1930–1990s, one of the best interpreters of Rilke, one of the last representatives of the intelligentsia in Russia. Her point of view was very different from the "conventional", her memories were improper for the Soviet state of public thought, which could be interpreted against the Soviet power: "Generally, the war years were terrible not only for loss of family and friends at the front, the deaths of thousands and thousands peaceful people from starvation and disease in the rear, but also for wide-spread general suspicion, destruction of their own people by the powerful and cruel NKVD machine that fulfilled plans to identify and punish the "unreliable", the constant fear of being among these poor innocent people who were persecuted, imprisoned and sent to Gulag, night arrests and "black funnel", "hunting" NKVD after dark. Suspect from the point of view of the NKVD could be everyone, including us" 96.

The veterans returned from the fields of war and were deeply impressed by income inequality among the inhabitants of one small Soviet town. Some people had time to make a fortune during the war, others were starving and begging. These are words of Alexander Shishkin, veteran of the Great Patriotic War. Throughout the war, he lost friends and relatives because of hunger. He came home on leave from the front to his father 2 May, 1945: "We received letters at the front – it is not bad, but we could not help the family. As a result my sister, my mother died during the

⁹⁵ Ibid. D. 245. P. 17

 $^{^{96}}$ Maria Pickel. Memoirs of life $/\!/$ From the personal archive of Tatiana Ivanova. Arkhangelsk. 2005. P. 153.

war... I was left alone with my father, so our apartment was taken from us. We were left without home, without family. There were people (soldiers, 33rd Regiment) that lived very badly, in rubbish, emaciated, ragged, while some people were walking, drinking and enjoying themselves."97

Survival in peaceful life turned out to be more difficult for the veterans – the Soviet system was not able to accept these people because they had been in the trenches and understood that there was real freedom compared to the totalitarian Soviet reality. Apart from poverty and humiliation, defenders of the motherland were repressed by the state – after the war the Soviet system began a new wave of repression against veterans.

According to official registrar data, 38,000 inhabitants died during the years 1941–1944 in Arkhangelsk: every fourth resident of Arkhangelsk died of starvation and diseases, every third (23,000) did not return from the front. Now no one knows how many deaths were unrecorded in the city during the war (refugees, persons without registration and identity documents, as well as citizens unaccounted for whatever reason and buried in mass graves). The mortality rate in the wartime Arkhangelsk was even higher because many citizens tried to hide the death of their relatives to get food for themselves on the cards of the dead. Many inhabitants died also after the official end of the war because of hunger and diseases which they acquired during the war⁹⁸.

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⁹⁷ Interview with Alexander Shishkin (born in 1921) was held at the place of residence of the informant 15:45–19:20 in November 9, 2007.

⁹⁸ Suprun M. Arkhangelsk in War // Dvina. № 1. P. 3

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