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Public Sentiment among the Population of the City of Leningrad and the Leningrad Region in June - August 1941: From Situation Reports of the NKGB of the USSR

Abstract

The article considers one aspect of everyday life of the population of Leningrad and the Leningrad region in the first months of the Great Patriotic War, which had been carefully concealed by official Soviet propaganda. Throughout all postwar decades up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian historical science continued to reproduce the myth of absolute unity of the Soviet society and mass patriotic enthusiasm of the working class, kolkhoz peasants and intelligentsia in the face of enemy aggression. And yet archival documents of the state security agencies reveal numerous facts and distinctive features of anti-Soviet manifestations among various socio-professional groups of the population of Leningrad and the Leningrad region in the first months following the German invasion in the Soviet territory. These facts show that the imminent war had a serious impact on the inner world of the inhabitants of the Northern capital of the Soviet Union, exacerbating numerous problems that had accumulated in the Soviet society in the decades before the war. The article mostly draws on the recently declassified situation reports of the People's Commissariat of State Security for the city of Leningrad and the Leningrad region from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense. It deals with such occurrences of anti-state sentiment as panic rumors, anti-Soviet agitation, listening to the radio-broadcasts of hostile states, distribution of anti-Soviet leaflets, planning pogroms of local party and state leaders. It analyses key features of anti-Soviet manifestations among urban and rural population. It contains information on the first manifestations of collaboration among those inhabitants of the Leningrad region, who had ended up in the territory occupied by the German troops. It studies mechanics of repressive activities of state security bodies caused by restructuring of Soviet society, while the military operations began.

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