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Siege Memorial Events Set Up

By Irina Titova

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ST. PETERSBURG — More than 154,000 Siege of Leningrad survivors living in St. Petersburg will celebrate the 68th anniversary of the full liberation of the city on Friday, Jan. 27. Events dedicated to the anniversary will, as usual, be held around the city.

"Our city is unique in this sense: There is no other city in the world that experienced such cruel genocide at the hands of Nazi Germany," said Irina Skripachyova, head of the city's Residents of the Siege of Leningrad public organization at a news conference Monday.

Skripachyova said "women and children were the face of the siege."

"This is because most of the people who remained in the city were women and children. Despite the hunger, many women continued to work while their children stayed at home. Even when those mothers weren't even strong enough to move, they still went back home because their children were waiting for them there," said Skripachyova, who was 10 years old during the siege.

Marina Zhuravlyova, deputy head of the city's Culture Committee, said the memory of the siege was imprinted in the blood of St. Petersburg residents.

"This date is therefore meaningful for many people in this city, and there will be many events aimed at marking it," Zhuravlyova said.

Some events dedicated to the anniversary have already begun in the city.

On Sunday, local military and history enthusiasts reenacted one of the biggest attacks aimed at breaking the siege.

The event, which drew several thousand spectators, was held in the location where the large-scale "January Thunderstorm" military operation took place on the Leningrad Front near the village of Porozhki. About 300 professional reenactment aficionados portrayed the successful attack of the Red Army against Nazi troops.

On Friday, memorial ceremonies will begin at 9:30 a.m., when city residents will lay flowers by the board at 14 Nevsky Prospekt that warns citizens to shelter on the other side of the street during artillery bombing.

Later that day, flowers will be laid at the Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad at Ploshchad Pobedy and at the Piskaryovskoye Cemetery, where many of those who perished during the siege are buried in communal graves.

The city will hold a number of concerts for siege survivors, including a traditional concert at the city's Oktyabrsky Concert Hall on Friday, and an outdoor karaoke concert the next day due to take place near Gostiny Dvor, where veterans and others will be able to sing wartime songs.

From Jan. 24 through 28, the city will also hold the 21st International Siege Survivors Association conference. More than 130 siege survivors currently living abroad are expected to attend the conference.

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