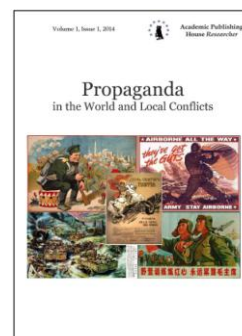


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## Anti-Soviet Advocacy, Agitation and Defeatism Activities in Leningrad and Leningrad Region, June – August 1941 (based on the NKGB (People's Commissariat for State Security) Situation Reports)

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### Abstract

This article reveals one of the most thoroughly hidden aspects of the everyday life in Leningrad and Leningrad region during the first months of the Great Patriotic war. Recently declassified NKGB situation reports on Leningrad and Leningrad region from the Central archive of the Ministry of Defense were used as the information source for this article. The article deals with anti-government manifestations such as spreading panic rumors, anti-Soviet advocacy, listening to enemy radio broadcasts, distributing anti-Soviet leaflets and planning riots against local party and State authorities. Both urban and rural anti-Soviet manifestations' specifics are revealed in the article, as well as repressive activities of the state security service, due to the restructuring of the Soviet society during the first months of the war. We considered certain features of moral and psychological state of Soviet citizens at the initial stage of the German aggression against the USSR.

**Keywords:** situation reports, spread of panic rumors, defeatism, Anti-Soviet advocacy, propaganda, repressive activities, NKGB.

### 1. Introduction

The past seven decades after the end of Great Patriotic war were marked by the creation of the tremendous research works of historians devoted to this historic landmark not only to develop the Soviet society, but also the whole civilization in the XX century. The unleashing of World War II by the Nazi Germany meant a challenge for the entire world order, which had to be totally destructed or submitted to the Third Reich leader plans. At the same time a significant number of research questions and scientific problems of the history of 1941–1945 still requires a more in-depth analysis.

For a long period of time the propaganda cliché of universal unity of the party and the people was implemented in the mass consciousness of the Soviet society and grew incredibly strong during the Great Patriotic war time. It was a very successful myth that was steadily reproduced by all media and repeated in the works of the Soviet sociologists continuously all the postwar period year upon year (Yazov, 1988; Natolochnaya, 2005). This approach totally rejected any attempt to cast a doubt on this postulate. However, the proclamation of the “glasnost” in the Soviet Union and the permission to cover the events of national history from a “pluralist” point of view led to the appearance of unreliable information in press, sometimes separate facts were taken out of the

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context and adjusted to fit the new concept. In general, the established methodological approaches were taken down and replaced with the new unclear ones, adapted to the new conditions. One could get the impression that people were trying to avenge their country's past for their own unsettled present (Semiryaga, 2000; Mertsalov, Mertsalova, 1998).

One of such periods from the country's latest history was the Great Patriotic War. The total list of issues that demanded a critical rethinking of Soviet historians, was as follows: not all the military operations of the Red Army were carried out successfully, the feasibility of extremely harsh measures against the Soviet troops was questioned and collaborators gained increasingly more defenders, whose status was changed from traitors to "enemies of Stalin's tyranny" and "fighters against totalitarianism" etc. The siege of Leningrad, one of the most tragic events of the Great Patriotic War, was questioned as well.

Over time, the emotional fever of the Perestroika began to decline, which resulted in a more balanced and objective research. Therefore, the author puts objectivity (independence from a particular concept and fondness) as a fundamental scientific principle of the article in considering the studied subject, as well as versatility (a consideration of the variety of trends and processes) in the mass consciousness of citizens of Leningrad and Leningrad region in June – August 1941, where the patriotic sentiments coexisted with decadent moods, expectations of a speedy victory of the Red Army were close to defeatist rumors, faith in Stalin was close to the mistrust towards the authorities of the city, government and party of a town, district, village council or an enterprise.

## 2. Materials and methods

Declassified materials of the People's Commissariat of State Security in the city of Leningrad and Leningrad region (Situation and intelligence reports from late June to late August 1941), taken from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence were used as a source of information for this article. In this study we differentiated various manifestations of anti-Soviet activity and revealed some individuals' features who were placed under the surveillance of the state security service of Leningrad and Leningrad region during the analyzed period of time.

Introduction of operational dispatches of the State Security service gives a fairly mixed picture of all sorts of anti-Soviet manifestations, of which the city authorities and interregional authorities of NKGB informed their supervisors. Only at first glance the entire set of the events may be perceived as a random conglomeration of disconnected facts. In fact, certain patterns can be traced in the expansion of the Soviet repressive machine. Of course, the beginning of the war had a profound impact on both spiritual state of the Soviet society and on the activities of the whole repressive machine. Let us dwell on this in greater detail.

The object of study in this article is the borderline of events and the phenomena of everyday life in the Soviet society, which was traditionally a sphere of competence of the USSR State Security service, and, therefore, was forbidden common citizens.

## 3. Results

Manifestations of anti-Soviet activities that Soviet legislation established as anti-Soviet, were very different: listening to foreign broadcasts, reading, storing, distributing anti-Soviet leaflets and other campaign materials, spreading panic rumors, etc. The number of cases of banditry, sabotage, infiltration of enemy reconnaissance groups, appearance of individuals with a particular interest in military equipment, defense facilities, communications and troop movements routes dramatically increased during the military invasion of the German troops into the territory of the Soviet Union, especially in the areas that were in close proximity to the war zone.

According to Segozyorsk NKVD district office, on July 5, 1941 at 9 AM 14 armed Finns arrived at the village of Pelkula in Leningrad region. They gathered the villagers and urged them to revolt against the Soviet government (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 83).

The first few months (June – August 1941) after the beginning of the Great Patriotic War proved to be extremely difficult for the government and party authorities of the country, as well as for every Soviet citizen, who had to change their entire way of life in accordance with the wartime. Despite the official propaganda cliché about uniting all they Soviet society beyond the Party and Government authority, high spirits and patriotism of the Soviet citizens, however, State Security service noted confusion and signs of defeatism in many settlements on the territory of the Leningrad Military District.

The intelligence service bulletin number 12 of the NKVD headquarters of the Leningrad border from June 26, 1941 reported that an employee of the Enso City Council Tsarenko was spreading panic among the people. On June 23, 1941 the accountant of the collective farm named after Chapaev, N. V. Shabashev, a non-party member, created panic among the farmers by spreading defeatism. This fact was confirmed by questioning of witnesses. The material of the case was transferred to the Yaskinskoe NKGB district office for a further investigation (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 30).

The operational intelligence service bulletin number 42 of the Northern Front rear Guard headquarters, in the period from 6 to 10 July 1941 received information about the officials spreading false panic rumors about the enemy. Leningrad Militiaman Tumanov was reported to be twice spreading false rumors about the landing of paratroopers and commandos of the enemy in the outskirts of the city. The materials of his case were handed over to the Chief of the Office of the Workers' and Peasants' militia of Leningrad (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 147).

The imbalance in the government activity led to following facts. According to Slutskoe NKGB district office, on 2<sup>nd</sup> of August of 1941 an anti-Soviet broadcast was transmitted for a few minutes in Russian from a German radio station through the radio unit of the farm named after Bdaev in Slutsk district. At the time of transmitting the employee responsible for the broadcasting center was absent. Security service started the investigation (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 15).

State security recorded all cases of anti-Soviet manifestations very carefully, starting from the conversations of Leningrad bars visitors to the statements of employees of preschools. Thus, on 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1941 Dzerzhinskoe district office of NKGB arrested V.P. Firsov, a mechanic of the plant named after Marti, who led an anti-Soviet agitation in the bar. State Security service started an investigation on the detained person. According to the Primorsky district department of NKGB, the accountant of the Institute for blind children Michelson and a nanny of 48th kindergarten Pochka led anti-Soviet agitations and praised the German invaders. An unofficial investigation was conducted on this fact (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 7, 3).

State security service careful attention to the working class was recorded long before the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. The monthly reports of the Information Department (INFO) of OGPU-NKVD from the beginning of 1922 contained the most diverse information about the situation and the mood of the industrial proletariat of various professional groups. Already in those years the top party and state leadership of the country was repeatedly informed on the acute reactions of the representatives of the working class on delays in wages, tariff rates, overstuffed factory managements, the inability of the authorities to cope with the continued growth of unemployment, street crime, etc.

During the outbreak of war, the tension among the working class began to "spill over" and took the form of anti-Soviet feelings, words and actions. Below there are some of the facts from the reports of district State Security service on the daily anti-Soviet actions manifestations in the city of Leningrad and Leningrad region.

Akulov, a mechanic of the 52<sup>nd</sup> repair brigade 5<sup>th</sup> military base who was, expelled from the Party, led an anti-Soviet agitation. Akulov's case was unofficially investigated (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 4).

According to the Primorsky district department of NKGB, Baranov, a janitor from the 14, Lakhtinskaya Street was praising the Nazi Germany. G.N. Nekrasov, a worker of the 5<sup>th</sup> construction office held anti-Soviet agitation among the workers who joined for the partisan group. The Head of the local Anti-aircraft warfare of Primorsk region, Petrova was spreading provocative rumors regarding the results of Moscow bombing by the Nazi Air Force (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 10).

According to the Leninsky NKGB district department, Vasilyev, a mechanic of the 1<sup>st</sup> rubber shoe factory, N.V. Azonchevsky, a mechanic of the "Metallometer" plant, V. Fedorov, a repairman of the factory named after P. Anisimova and V. Kozalevsky, a worker from the "Krasnii treugolnik" shoe factory conducted anti-Soviet agitations. The unofficial investigation was initiated against all these people as well as preparations for Azonchevsky's arrest. A worker from the "Rabochii Khimik" farm, Petushkov, evading the defense work, said: "This war doesn't concern me and I'm not going to work for more than 8 hours". The employees of the NKGB district department began investigations on Petushkov's case (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 11).

N.V. Tatarov, unemployed, conducted anti-Soviet defeatist agitation. His arrest was being prepared (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 3).

According to Moscow NKGB district department, E.M. Mikhailova, a worker of the “Lengaz” plant, was conducting “corrupting” work among the workers, who joined the partisan units, urging them to surrender to the Germans. Her arrest was being prepared (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 11).

Leningrad State Security service authority paid particular attention to the representatives of the former privileged classes, especially if they were German by nationality.

Here are the facts noted in the operational reports of the Leningrad NKGB Control unit during the first war months of 1941: A.A. Gessen, a former landlord and a tradeswoman, German by nationality, who lived at 12, Blokhina street, conducted anti-Soviet agitation. Her case was investigated. According to Otyabrsky NKGB district department, A.D. Gering, a former plant owner, German by nationality, who was working for «Intrudoobsluzhivanie» company and Sakharova, an accountant of the household at 11, Soyuz Sviazi street were conducting anti-Soviet agitations. The facts were verified (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 3, 4, 11).

According to the Starorussky NKGB district department, N.V. Kaidalova, the wife of the ex-bailiff and an active church woman, as well as Andreev, a worker of the fire-brigade guard of the plywood plant were conducting defeatist agitations. Kaidalova’s and Andreev’s arrests were being prepared (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 16).

According to the authorities, the social groups of those who were “overthrown” during the October armed uprising of 1917 and the short "entrepreneurial renaissance" period of NEP (former owners of property, businesses, shops and other facilities) were joined by former members of the Menshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary groups, supporters of various opposition factions and trends that were “related” in their anti-Soviet essence and excluded from the Party.

One of the typical examples is the following excerpt from the situation report of Leningrad and Leningrad region NKGB department.

According to Malovishersky NKGB district department, the former active Trotskist, P.V. Ivnitsky, who was living in the city of Chudovo and was a Head of the Lenzagotplodovoshtorg office, the former Tzar army officer Bobrov and Parfenov M. V., a worker from the “Proletarskoe znamya” factory conducted anti-Soviet agitations and spread provocative rumors. State Security service began their investigation on these facts (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 11).

On 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1941 Starorusskoe NKGB district department arrested I.F. Povarov, an accountant of Satrorussky Union of Osoaviakhim and an active Trotskist for conducting defeatism propaganda and agitation activities. A search in his apartment revealed an unauthorized gun (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 17).

Pushkinsky NKVD district department registered several cases of close relatives of people repressed by the NKVD expressing the intention to avenge the Communists for their loved ones in case of the arrival of the Germans.

So, the wife of a convicted to capital punishment Podlessky, leading defeatist agitation among the residents of the house where she lived, said: "The Germans will come, and we, along with my husband will avenge the Communists, and we will strike them as the Germans do”. Polesskaya’s arrest was being prepared.

Anti-Soviet sentiments were mostly spurred by the disappointing reports from the front. The refugees from the Baltic states made their additions to that information. According to the Borovichsky interdistrict department of NKGB the following people were arrested for the anti-Soviet agitation activities: N.Y. Golikov, an employee of the “Red ceramic” factory, Ruzi, a librarian of the 12<sup>th</sup> engineering factory, A.P. Vasilyeva, a member of the “Krasnaya gorka” collective farm, I. Ivanov, a member of the Moshensky region “2<sup>nd</sup> bolshevistsky sev” collective farm, I.F. Frolov, a member of the Moshensky region “1<sup>st</sup> of May” collective farm, and a member of the Lyubitkinsky region “Parizhskaya kommuna” collective farm. All those people were suspected in spreading anti-Soviet defeatist rumors and were under the investigation of the Borovichsky interdistrict department of NKGB (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 5).

According to the Borovichsky interdistrict department of NKGB, a deputy of the Bykovskiy village council of the Borovichsky district Galakhova conducted the anti-Soviet agitation activity and proposed to share the collective farm lands and to “live separately” (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 12).

Being related to the kulaks clearly put a person under the category of the potentially dangerous and unreliable people, who could, according to the State authorities and the State Security service, at any time, go to the side of the enemy of the Soviet power. The following reports contain a reference to the kulak origin of those involved in anti-Soviet activities. A.M. Mikhailova, a teacher of the Ustyinsk school who came from a kulak family, conducted anti-Soviet agitation (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 12; F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 73).

According to Starorussky district department of NKVD, Smirnov I. V., a former kulak, who lived in the city of Staraya Russa and was unemployed at that time, conducted the anti-Soviet agitation activities. His arrest was being processed (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 5).

Even a short-term occupation by German troops of certain areas in the Leningrad region showed that there were a certain number of citizens who were forced to carefully mask their hatred to the Soviet regime. As soon as they got an opportunity, they were willing to support Germany immediately.

Considering the peculiarities of the struggle of the State Security service with the anti-Soviet agitation, it is necessary to note that under the conditions of formation and consolidation of a totalitarian political regime, the term "anti-Soviet" was extremely broad. This could be attributed to the townsfolk disputes in a communal kitchen or to conversations during breaks in the "smoking rooms" at work or to a retelling of news and rumors heard from a colleague, and even to a person's point of view on some events of internal and foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which might not coincide with the official ideology.

During the wartime, the State Security service stepped up significantly in their agent work, and the agents were directed to identify all manifestations of anti-Soviet activities and people involved in them.

A former Chairman of the Pestovsky region village council, M.I. Belyakov, was conducting anti-Soviet agitation activities and organized broadcasting of the anti-Soviet foreign radio stations. Belyakov was said to be arrested (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 17).

The intelligence bulletin number 12 of the NKVD Headquarters of the Leningrad border region on June 26, 1941 reported that according to the information received from the agents of the 5th border unit, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June of 1941, in the city of Enso, in the apartment of L.A. Gryaznov, a viscose factory Chief Engineer, his "SI-235" radio received an unknown German radio station's "Hitler's declaration in Russian" broadcast. His wife, also a party member, was listening to the broadcast, as well as the three executives of the same factory, two of whom were also party members. It was reported that the fact of receiving the above-mentioned broadcast was confirmed by the unofficial interrogation. For further investigation the material of this case was handed over to the Enso NKVD district department (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 30).

Apparently, they were listening to the address of the chancellor of the Nazi Germany Adolf Hitler to the German people in connection with the attack on the USSR translated into Russian (*Der Führer...*, 1942: 51-61). This Führer's speech that justified the beginning of the invasion of the Wehrmacht in the USSR was not significantly different from his previous appeals to the nation: on the Anschluss of Austria (12-13, August 1938), on the annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia (1-10, October 1938), announcements on Bohemia and Moravia becoming a protectorate of Germany (15, March 1939) and on Wehrmacht invading the territory of Poland (1, September 1939).

The beginning of each military campaign of the Nazi Germany was followed by Hitler's speech to the Germans to justify the lawfulness of the German army invasion on the territory of a sovereign state. But this time, Hitler brought up two arguments in his speech: German preemptive strike against 160 Soviet divisions that were supposedly preparing to invade the borders of Germany and the need to halt the worldwide Jewish conspiracy, which stretched its thread to Moscow and London.

The indisputable fact is that the German propaganda reached Leningrad and found a fertile ground in the minds of certain individuals. For example, Lyubomirskaya, an employee at the mechanical manufacture was distributing a provocative insinuation that the war with Germany started was the fault of the Soviet Union. State Security service started the unofficial investigation (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 14).

It should be noted that, for a Soviet citizen individual, who was not enlightened in the Third Reich's foreign politics the conclusions of the leader of the Nazi Germany didn't seem absolutely

baseless, especially when it came to the prevalence of Jews in leader positions in the Soviet State at the end of 1930s – early 1940s.

There is no coincidence that in a number of NKVD situation reports in Leningrad region it was noted that the local population were frequently giving negative remarks towards the Soviet leaders and the Soviet system as a whole.

The most notable cases of anti-Soviet manifestations during the first war months were the hostile leaflets spread in different places, as noted in NKVD situation reports. As the Germans advanced towards Leningrad, the frequency of appearance of the anti-Soviet leaflets in many parts of the city greatly increased.

Let us form a timeline of the frequency of appearance of the messages of this type of the Nazi Germany propaganda against the Red Army and the civilian population of Leningrad and Leningrad region in the State Security service reports during the period of late June – late August of 1941.

From the first days of the Great Patriotic War Soviet citizens, residents of the city of Leningrad and Leningrad region proved to be objects of the German propaganda war against the Soviet Union. According to the Petrogradsky NKGB district department, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, 1941 Z.K. Abramova, a teacher of the Primorsky region school № 52, found 7 anti-Soviet leaflets (written in ink and colored pencil) in the tram number 12, en route to the Kirov Islands, on the floor of the carriage.

A capital letter “S!” was drawn on the leaflets in colored pencil. The text, calling to spread everywhere the letter «S» was aside as well as the decryption of this letter, urging for terror against the Party and the Soviet government (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 3).

According to the Ocityabrsky NKGB district department, on 1<sup>st</sup> of August of 1941, a handwritten anti-Soviet leaflet was found during the cleaning of the mailbox number 180 of the postal department of the city of Leningrad. The author called for an active struggle against the Soviet power and to the termination of the party leaders. The leaflet was signed: "A member of the Org. Committee". State security service informed about the beginning of the search of the anonymous author (TsAMO. F. 249. Op. 1544. D. 29. L. 10).

According to the report of the OVT HQ, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, 3500 anti-Soviet leaflets were found in the Manduselg region (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 406).

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 1941, Operational Division Headquarters of the Leningrad Military Region received a situation report number 122 from the “UKLON” HQ, which stated the following. According to the report of the commander of the 56th Fighter Battalion Lieutenant Chechurin, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1941 at 22.55 his troop fighters Daleneko and Landa found 30 anti-Soviet leaflets in Russian in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paddock of the tram №9. The leaflets were packed on the front area, two of them were found on the floor in the middle of the carriage. It was noted that the carriage was full of people before the incident. All the leaflets were immediately seized and handed over to the chief of the NKVD district department to identify their source (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 403).

Possession of an enemy leaflet was a serious case for a Red Army soldier, consequencing to an investigation. For example, a Leningrad Front situation report stated that: “P.A. Safronov, a Red Army soldier from the first company of the 14th Infantry Regiment left looking for a lamp for his dugout. Wandering through the empty houses and dugouts, he came in the dugout of the 119 Infantry Regiment, where he was arrested. During the search, in his inventory he had 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment soldiers’ possessions, 2 German leaflets and passes for the 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment”. The detainee was handed over to the Red Army for further State Security investigations (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 110. L. 112).

The operational, intelligence and operational intelligence reports of the NKVD border troops headquarters, rear Guard troops of the Northern Front and NKVD divisions since the beginning of July 1941 were marked by the intensification of German command advocacy against the Red Army soldiers and local civilians, often involving aviation.

According to the rear guard troop headquarters of the Northern Front operative intelligence reports, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1941, an anti-revolution leaflet was found by the Group on the "VCH" protection line under the command of Lieutenant Gran (14th Motorized Rifle NKVD regiment in the Khaniil region). It was passed to the Vyborg city NKVD department. Apparently, the leaflet was thrown from a plane (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 127).

For example, according to the 7<sup>th</sup> army OVT headquarters report, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1941 on the Loukhi-Kestenga railway line Red Army soldiers found several anti-Soviet leaflets that were thrown from a German plane. The leaflets were destroyed (TsAMO. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 192. L. 403).

#### 4. Conclusion

By all means, it is hardly possible to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the designated problem in one article. We can make some interim conclusions that can lay the foundation for further studies of such an understudied problem as anti-Soviet propaganda during the initial stage of the Great Patriotic War.

The beginning of the military operations stirred up the public consciousness of the Soviet society and it was clearly demonstrated on the example of Leningrad and Leningrad region citizens. End of June – end of August 1941 was a relatively short period; however, it clearly highlighted metamorphoses in social consciousness intricately connected to the everyday life of Leningrad citizens. Due to the fact that the State Security service had to contend with the various manifestations of anti-state activities, various negative phenomena primarily fell in the scope of their interests.

General rule was that with the strengthening of the totalitarian state limit, everything that fell under the term “hostile”, whether it was action or a verbal expression of a personal attitude, was steadily expanding. Therefore, nobody was immune to repressions in the Soviet society in the second half of 1930 – the beginning of the 1940s. The article includes specific facts regarding people that were caught by the city and regional departments of Leningrad and Leningrad region of NKGB during the last two months. The facts indicate that both a housewife and an industrial worker fell under secret surveillance, both party members and non-party members could be arrested.

At the same time, the Party authorities set up a certain gradation of the enemies of the Soviet power for the law enforcement. The list of criteria that drew the attention of the security service included being from a property-owning origin, service in the Police during the monarchy, serving in the White Guard army, being an “active churchman”, being involved in the former opposition groups and movements membership within the ruling party. All of the listed above almost automatically turned the citizen into a politically unreliable person according to NKGB.

In general, the political leadership of the country, following its theory of a steady increase of the class struggle as they moved to the construction of socialism in the USSR, contributed to the split of the society instead of its consolidation. This was clearly seen on the occupied territory by German troops and their allies, when a certain part of the population expressed a voluntary desire to enter the service of the Nazi Germany to the detriment of their own homeland. The collaboration of 1941–1944 was not accidental, but a natural consequence of the socio-economic, political, legal and ethical deformations that took place during the preceding decades.

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