



History

For centuries the cultural heart of Russia and the second largest city in the Soviet Union, Leningrad was a prime target of the advancing German Army Group North in June 1941. One of the stated reasons for the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-1940 was to protect the former Czarist capital, St. Petersburg, later called Leningrad, from Finnish attack.

When the Germans invaded, they called on the Finns to attack Leningrad from the north. On the shore of Lake Ladoga, Leningrad had political significance as the city named for the founder of the Russian Revolution, but it also had military significance as it prevented the Germans from sweeping around the north of Russia and attacking Moscow from behind.

The population of Leningrad turned out shortly after the invasion and dug antitank ditches around the city. Two hundred thousand Red Army defenders protected 3,000,000 inhabitants.

Within weeks of crossing the border, the Germans cut the Leningrad-Moscow railway and the Germans advanced on the city. The attack failed and the Nazi Generals appealed to Hitler to start a siege, so panzer units badly needed elsewhere could be released. Hitler readily agreed on September 29, 1941. Furthermore, he ordered that the city be reduced so that the Germans would not have to feed its population. Relentless shelling and air raids began and lasted for the next 872 days.



Soviet naval units tried to evacuate the sick and wounded, but Leningrad came to symbolize the horrors of the Eastern Front. Starvation claimed thousands of lives, and it was not uncommon to find corpses left in the street. Six hundred fifty thousand died in 1942 alone. The brutal winter of 1941-42 that stopped the Germans in the south only added to Leningrad's agony.

Supplies came in sporadically by barge across Lake Ladoga during the summer of 1942 and during the winters trucks would drive over the frozen ice. Truck convoys would sink in bomb craters left by Stuka attacks and would disappear in the rapidly melting ice as the temperature increased in the spring. Some 500,000 residents were taken out, but most stayed and many died. The summer thaws would reveal more corpses in the streets, forgotten and buried by snow.

Starvation was eased in 1943 by vegetable gardens that were planted on any open ground. Incredibly, war production continued in

factories frozen by winter air coming through shell holes and bomb craters in the ceiling.

In January 1943, the siege was broken by a Soviet offensive, but not completely lifted.

In 1943 and 1944 a small FW 190-equipped unit flew fighter-bomber operations from Finland against targets in and around the Baltic region and Barents sea, and achieved success disproportionate to the number of aircraft available to it. The unit was 14.(*Jabo*)/JG5.

Flying in the far north offered unique challenges, but the results achieved indicate the pilots of the *Staffel* adapted quite well to the conditions experienced inside the Arctic Circle. Despite flying obsolete variants of the FW 190, 14.(*Jabo*)/JG5 demonstrated the effectiveness of the FW 190 as a fighter-bomber, particularly against shipping targets.



In the early summer of 1943, 14.(*Jabo*)/J.G. 5 was at the peak of its success. In a three-day period early in May 1943, two 'M'-class submarines were destroyed by *Fw.* Karl-Heinz Froschek and *Uffz.* Walter Pohl, and a 2,000-ton auxiliary and a 3,000-ton freighter were sunk by *Hptm.* Strakeljahn.^[6] Congratulations for these feats came from the highest level of the German command:

16.5.1943

From Fliegerführer Nord (Ost)

To: 14.(Jabo)/J.G. 5 Petsamo

*Following teletype for attention of all personnel:
'The Führer has expressed his recognition of the attacks on shipping
carried out by the Jabos of Fliegerführer Nord (Ost), and further
conveys his wishes that these operations be continued with all
available means.'*^[7]



The Eismeer Mission

Current situation:

October 23rd, 1943. Leningrad remains under siege. The Wehrmacht has been pushed back, but still threatens the very heart of Russia. A vital for supplies is still through the Baltic Sea.



Following German success against Russian shipping, Russia made strikes to hit the Jabo unit's base in order to hurt them, but were not effective in stopping the loss of shipping. Currently, in the western Baltic, a large Russian supply fleet is massing. In order to protect it, Russian high command has ordered a dedicated, concentrated strike against Germany's foothold in the region.

The Germans have their own orders. Strike the fleet before it can affect the siege on Leningrad.

Armourers of 14 (Jabo)/JG 5 loading an SC 250 bomb beneath 'Black 9', an Fw 190 fighter-bomber at Petsamo, Finland in late 1943. The SC series of bombs were used where a purely blast effect was required and had thin-walled casings so that they could be filled with the maximum explosive content. During 1942 and 1943, it was thought that, at the most, four or six aircraft could be employed against a single target and that the attack should be carried out in pairs. The reason for this was that if any more aircraft were employed together they would disturb each other in the air. Later, when increased Soviet anti-aircraft defences were encountered, the Fw 190 fighter-bomber units of the Schlachtflieger found the best results were achieved by exactly the opposite tactics and, adopting the methods previously employed by the Ju 87 units, preferred to make a concentrated massed attack which split the enemy's defences and had the greatest effect on enemy morale.

