

Screenplay for the film "1942 — Klavdiya Shulzhenko. Historical Chronicles with Nikolai Svanidze" written by Marina Zhukova, translated by AI, and preceded by a summary also written by AI.

Screenplay Summary:

The text offers a broad panorama of the year 1942, depicted as the darkest year of the Second World War for the Soviet Union, closely intertwined with the life and career of singer Klavdia Shulzhenko. After the Soviet victory near Moscow in December 1941, Stalin becomes overconfident and imagines he can defeat Germany completely in 1942. He is already discussing the post-war order with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, demanding recognition of Soviet territorial gains under the Nazi–Soviet pact and downplaying the urgency of a second front. Convinced that, as in 1812, the enemy is broken, he orders massive offensives, most notably the Rzhev–Vyazma operation conducted by Zhukov and Konev. The Red Army, exhausted and poorly supplied, is driven forward without rest in an extraordinarily harsh winter. Losses are enormous, operations remain unfinished, and later marshals such as Rokossovsky will criticize the Stavka’s blindness, arguing that the offensives wore down Soviet forces more than the enemy’s.

At the same time, Hitler, traumatized by the failure at Moscow, clings to the hope of a decisive victory in 1942. He issues a stop-order forbidding unauthorized retreats, seeing this as his last chance before the overwhelming industrial and resource power of the Allies makes German defeat inevitable. On the Eastern Front, attritional battles, brutal weather and Stalin’s miscalculations lead to disasters such as the Kharkov encirclement, in which 240,000 Soviet soldiers are taken prisoner. The author underlines Stalin’s personal responsibility for these murderous “cauldrons” (Kiev, Vyazma, Smolensk, Kharkov) and notes that from Stalingrad onward, command of the war increasingly passes to professional military leaders.

*Against this apocalyptic backdrop, the figure of Klavdia Shulzhenko embodies another dimension of the war: culture, love and moral endurance. A variety singer from Kharkov and a star of pre-war Leningrad, she becomes one of the key voices of the front and the besieged city. In 1942, at the Volkhov Front, she performs *The Blue Kerchief* with new lyrics written by a young lieutenant. The song turns into an unofficial anthem: young officers go into attack waving strips of blue cloth and shouting “For the blue kerchief!”, a spontaneous, emotional battle cry far more genuine than the official slogan “For the Motherland! For Stalin!”, which soldiers themselves rarely use and which propagandists strictly enforce. To shout “For the blue kerchief” is, politically, almost a crime.*

The text also recounts Shulzhenko’s life during the siege of Leningrad: she lives in the basement of the Officers’ House with her husband, her father and her son, and gives hundreds of concerts in factories, dugouts and shelters, often to audiences too starved to applaud. Parallel to her story, the narrative exposes the social underside of the blockade: extreme rationing, mass starvation, corpses in the streets, survival cannibalism, children snatching bread, mothers starving themselves to feed their children. Social inequality is stark: while ordinary citizens lick plates and eat glue, leather and sawdust, Smolny—the seat of the party leadership—has ample food, pastries and regular utilities. Memoirs and diary fragments show physical collapse but also extraordinary inner

resilience, with people continuing to write, think and complete scholarly work even on the brink of death.

Shulzhenko's private life is interwoven with this historical canvas. Her father dies of starvation, yet is buried in a coffin—an almost miraculous privilege during the winter of 1942. Her son narrowly escapes the bombing of Kharkov thanks to comedian Arkady Raikin, who takes the boy to Leningrad and probably saves his life. After the war she will have a long relationship with cameraman Zhora Epifanov, who adores and films her and is present at her final major concert in 1976, when she appears with a blue kerchief and moves the audience to tears—The Blue Kerchief remaining her emblematic song and a symbol of wartime memory.

The text then widens its focus to occupied Kharkov: the registration of Jews on special yellow forms, the creation of a ghetto, the mass shootings at Drobitsky Yar, gas vans and torture chambers, and the atmosphere of denunciation and collaboration. At the same time, some local residents later receive the title “Righteous Among the Nations” for saving Jews. Actress Lyudmila Gurchenko's childhood memories of public hangings at the Blagoveshchensky market illustrate the deliberate brutalization of civilians, with children forced to watch executions.

The final image is both chilling and symbolic: in June 1942, Kharkov's opera house is packed for a performance of Swan Lake; at the end of the ballet, German officers leave the theater to head straight for the offensive on Stalingrad. High culture and total war coexist within the same scene, underscoring the central idea of the text: 1942 is a year where extreme cruelty, political blindness, and human dignity—embodied in voices like Shulzhenko's—are tragically entangled.

Screenplay:

1942 – Klavdiya Shulzhenko

1942 was the most desperate year of the war. The choked-off offensive near Moscow, the loss of Crimea, the bloody cauldron near Kharkov, the retreat back to the Caucasus and the Volga. 1942 was the year of the most terrible human losses.

In Moscow, 1942 began on an optimistic note. As a result of the counteroffensive in December 1941, the Germans were pushed back from the capital. By the beginning of 1942, Stalin had already gone through two personal crises: one at the very start of the war, the second when the Germans came right up to Moscow. Those crises were now in the past. Stalin became obsessed with the analogy to 1812: the enemy had been beaten; now he had to be pursued and finally crushed. After the victory near Moscow, Stalin lost all interest in the question of Great Britain and the United States opening a second front.

From December 16 to 20, 1941, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was in Moscow on a visit. Just ten days after the Soviet offensive near Moscow began, Stalin started talking with Eden about the post-war order. Stalin demanded that Britain recognize the USSR's pre-war western borders, that is, confirm the territorial acquisitions the USSR had obtained in accordance with the secret protocols to the pact between the USSR and Hitler's Germany. If Britain agreed to confirm Soviet conquests in Eastern Europe, Stalin was prepared to drop his demand for the opening of a second front. Stalin said: “Our troops will soon be able to occupy the Baltic States again.”

Two weeks later, on January 5, 1942, the plan for a general offensive by the Red Army was discussed at the High Command (the Stavka). The essence of the plan was set out on January 10, 1942 in a directive letter from Stalin: "To ensure the complete destruction of Hitler's forces in 1942." Stalin really did intend to finish the war in 1942. Colonel-General Belov recalls: "At the Stavka the critical attitude toward the situation had weakened; many things were seen in far too rosy a light. In developing gigantic plans the Stavka did not take actual reality into account."

By mid-January, the Red Army went over to the offensive along a thousand-kilometer front from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. On February 23, 1942, Stalin wrote in his holiday order: "The initiative is now in our hands. The efforts of Hitler's rickety, rusty machine cannot stop the onslaught of the Red Army."

The main Soviet operation was a strategic offensive aimed at completely destroying the German Army Group Center on the Rzhev–Vyazma salient. It involved the troops of the Western Front, commanded by Zhukov, and the Kalinin Front, commanded by Konev. It was a continuation—without a break—of the counteroffensive that had begun near Moscow on December 5, 1941. A continuation with no pause. The troops had no rest.

Hitler was shaken by the events near Moscow; he dismissed Field Marshal Brauchitsch and assumed direct command of the army. And he could not get the fate of Napoleon's army out of his head.

Winter, the absence of a quick victory, the moral breakdown. Hitler felt that his forces were on the brink of a "Napoleonic catastrophe." His first order was to forbid unauthorized withdrawals. A stop-order. For Hitler, 1942 was the last chance to seize Russia. The United States had already entered the war. For the moment they were absorbed in their own problems with Japan and, although they were giving the USSR substantial material aid, they had not yet opened a second front. But soon two-thirds of the world's industry and raw materials would be working against Hitler. And that simple arithmetic meant Germany's inevitable defeat. 1942 was the last chance to win.

In January 1942, temperatures were minus 35–40 degrees. Snowstorms. Snow up to a meter deep. There had not been such a winter in Russia for 140 years. The Soviet counteroffensive had gone on non-stop through all of December. The following were liberated: December 7 – Yakhroma, December 8 – Krasnaya Polyana, December 11 – Istra, December 14 – Yasnaya Polyana, December 15 – Klin, December 16 – Kalinin, December 19 – Tarusa, December 20 – Volokolamsk, December 26 – Naro-Fominsk, December 30 – Kaluga, January 17 – Ruza. On January 20, after a three-day assault, Mozhaisk was taken. On the 22nd, Uvarovka, the last German strongpoint in the Moscow region, was retaken.

Rzhev, 200 kilometers from Moscow, would only be taken in March 1943. Nearly half a million men would die in the battle for Rzhev.

In January 1942, our troops advancing from Moscow were exhausted. Food supplies were limited. The offensive was running out of steam. Yet on January 29, the command of the Western Front issued the order "to continue wearing down the enemy by offensive actions."

In Marshal Rokossovsky's memoirs, in the 1990 edition, there is a comment on this order. In earlier editions that comment had been removed. Rokossovsky writes: "With our offensive operations we wore down our own troops many times more than the enemy's. That wearing down benefited the

enemy, not us.” Marshal of Artillery Voronov made a grim joke: “We’re lucky that the resources of the Soviet rear are inexhaustible.”

On February 16, the Stavka demanded that Army Group Center be destroyed once and for all. That task would not be carried out. In textbooks on military art, the Rzhev–Vyazma operation is called “unfinished.” Marshal Rokossovsky called it an “offensive venture.” “Offensive battles,” he recalled, “devoured men like flames devour dry grass.” In 1966, at a meeting at the editorial office of *The Military History Journal*, Zhukov would say: “Well, everyone was cocky then—and I underestimated the condition of the enemy group around Vyazma.”

The total losses of the Kalinin and Western Fronts from January 8 to April 20, 1942 came to 776,889 men. Konev’s Kalinin Front was laid down almost in its entirety: 341,227 dead. The remaining 435,662 men died on Zhukov’s Western Front.

On April 20, the Stavka decided to switch the Western and Kalinin Fronts to the defensive.

On April 20, German General Halder wrote in his diary: “Situation: surprisingly calm.”

A week earlier, on April 12, 1942, Klavdia Shulzhenko performed the song *The Blue Kerchief* (*Siniy Platochek*) with new lyrics for the first time. It was a pre-war song whose composer, Jerzy Petersburski, was a Pole who had ended up in the USSR after the partition of Poland under the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Another famous romance, “The Tired Sun Tenderly Took Leave of the Sea,” is also his. Before the war, *The Blue Kerchief* was sung by Lidiya Ruslanova and Isabella Yuryeva. Shulzhenko had flatly refused to perform that pre-war hit from someone else’s repertoire.

In 1942, at the Volkhov Front, a 22-year-old lieutenant, Mikhail Maksimov, approached Shulzhenko and, blushing, told her that he had written new lyrics for *The Blue Kerchief*. She promised to read them. Shulzhenko had an astounding intuition, a sense of what her audience needed. She performed the song the very day she read the verses. A month later the entire front and the entire rear knew the new song. Company commanders, practically boys, were already raising pieces of blue cloth on their bayonets and charging with the cry “For the blue kerchief!”

As for the shout “For the Motherland! For Stalin!”, soldiers never yelled that. When they rose to attack, apart from swearwords, they shouted nothing. But the officers and political commissars leading them in attack had been ordered to cry out the officially approved slogan—and no variations, no improvisation, only “For the Motherland! For Stalin!” So to go into the attack “for the blue kerchief” was a political crime.

In blockaded Leningrad, Klavdia Shulzhenko and her husband, the well-known variety performer Vladimir Koralli, lived with her father and son in the basement of the Officers’ House. They lived there until mid-1943, and from there they went to their concerts. Before the war, Shulzhenko and her husband had led a jazz orchestra. With the start of the war, the troupe became the Leningrad Front Jazz Ensemble. All the performers were registered as volunteers. Everyone was issued military uniforms. At one of the very first front-line concerts for pilots, Shulzhenko was asked to perform in her stage dresses, as she did before the war.

From the very first concerts at the front it became clear that the audience—men who would be going to their deaths in just a few hours—most of all wanted to hear lyrical songs. Lyricism was Shulzhenko’s strong point; that is why audiences loved her and that is why critics disliked her so much. Before the war and for long after. She would only be canonized as a “classic” of the stage much later, at the end of the 1960s.

Shulzhenko used to say: “I just can’t sing ‘Vast is My Native Land’.”

The poet Pavel Leonidov, author of many of Shulzhenko’s songs, wrote: “She’s a heroic actress, since she has managed for fifty years to sing only about love.”

In Leningrad, Shulzhenko made her debut not just anywhere but at the Mariinsky Theatre. It was on May 5, 1928, at a mixed concert—the very cream of Leningrad’s culture. After a dance by the already famous Vakhtang Chabukiani, the master of ceremonies announced: “Comrades! I have a surprise for you. In Kharkov I discovered an absolutely extraordinary girl. For the first and only time, passing through—Klavdia Shulzhenko!” She sang six songs. The hall went wild. She stepped out shyly to bow. Her famous, deep, signature bow from the waist had not yet been born. A tall young man backstage said to her with a smile: “I don’t even know how to perform after you. One ought to be warned.” It was Nikolai Cherkasov.

Later she sang in the Titan cinema on Nevsky Prospect. At that time it was serious work. Established artists performed there. People often came more for the concert than for the film. Back then, Shulzhenko did not care for cinema. She adored only Chaplin. She gained her own audience. Her name was printed in large letters on posters. She formed a friendship with Utyosov. Sometimes in the evenings they would play preference with Utyosov and the 24-year-old Dmitri Shostakovich. Shostakovich was the most ardent gambler of the group. He wrote two songs for her: “Oh, How Pleasant in the Evening” and “Darling, You See Here and There.” Later, Utyosov decided that Shulzhenko should play the leading role in the film *Jolly Fellows*. But, as is well known, a completely different woman would become the star of that film and of Soviet cinema.

A year before the war, a 22-year-old student in the camera department of the State Institute of Cinematography, Zhora Epifanov, was doing his pre-graduation internship in Leningrad. Having bought an extra ticket, he ended up at the show *First Aid*, which featured the jazz ensemble of Shulzhenko and Koralli. The plot of the show seemed idiotic to the young cameraman, and he was about to leave. But then an enormous gramophone appeared on stage, its lid opened. On the slowly spinning turntable stood a slim young woman in a dark dress that hugged her fine figure, with short blond hair. She smiled at the audience and then began to sing. She made unexpected pauses, sometimes almost whispered. The hall listened, frozen.

Epifanov asked who this Shulzhenko was. People didn’t understand him. She was already a pride of Leningrad. Epifanov started buying up all her records. Then he took the risk of sending her a postcard to congratulate her on Navy Day. He would send postcards signed with his initials, “E. G.,” for seventeen years. Even during the war, when he was a front-line cameraman.

They met in 1957. And they had seven years of a very bright, late love. Twelve years after their breakup, on April 10, 1976, Shulzhenko would give her last concert—in Moscow, in the Columned Hall. She stepped out with a blue kerchief in her hand, the hall rose and applauded for seven minutes. Connoisseurs say this concert was the best of her fifty years on stage, with no allowances made for her age. Utyosov sat in one of the boxes. Epifanov was in the television crew’s box. She sang a song to Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s lyrics, “And the Snow Will Pour Down.” Men in the hall wept, their grey heads bowed, while women watched her in rapture in her pale blue dress. Epifanov almost fainted. She made her incredibly fluid bow. Epifanov rushed out of the hall. She began her famous song “Three Waltzes.”

“I remember my first student ball,” she said, glancing toward where Epifanov had been sitting. Not seeing him, she forgot the text. And she started mumbling something. She forgot the words of a

song she had sung for more than twenty years because suddenly she did not see him in the audience. Someone might have thought this was the first sign of old age. But it wasn't old age at all. She was already singing on. Epifanov came back into the hall, sat there thinking that it ought to be impossible to sing like that at seventy.

For the first time, Klavdia Shulzhenko sang *The Blue Kerchief* for those who worked on the road that ran across Lake Ladoga from blockaded Leningrad to the mainland. Years later, academician Dmitry Likhachev would write that "this ice road was called 'the road of death', and not 'the road of life', as our writers later gilded it." The Germans kept it under fire, the road was buried in snow, trucks broke through into the ice holes. In some trucks there were women, in others children. Sometimes a truck full of children would break through the ice. The children drowned. The truck full of women would drive around the hole and roar on, without stopping. Uncounted people died there; uncounted people went mad.

The blockade began on September 8. On that evening, a cloud of remarkable beauty rose over the city. It grew and turned pink in the rays of the setting sun. It was a cloud of flour. Then it was covered by the smoke of burning oil. The Germans had bombed the Badaev food warehouses. After the fire it was announced that the main part of the city's food reserves had been destroyed. Severe restrictions on food distribution were introduced. Although the Badaev warehouses were not the only ones in the city.

In the first months of the war, there was a real opportunity to replenish the city's food stocks. Mikoyan, who was in charge of supplying the army with food, writes: "Many trains heading west could not reach their destination because their intended recipients were already on territories occupied by the enemy. I ordered those trains to be diverted to Leningrad."

At that time Stalin received a call from Andrei Zhdanov, the first secretary of the Leningrad regional committee. Zhdanov said that all the Leningrad warehouses were packed and asked that no food be sent to them beyond the plan. Mikoyan writes: "Stalin instructed me not to send Leningraders food in excess of their quota without their consent." Their—meaning Zhdanov's—consent.

On September 2, the bread ration for workers was 600 grams, for children 300. On September 11, the workers' ration was 500 grams, children's still 300. On October 1, workers received 400 grams, all others 200. On November 20, the workers' bread ration was 250 grams, for the rest 125. A document from one of Leningrad's factories reads: "Please allow Comrade Ganov to pass through the gate with his supplementary food—half a liter of linseed oil and a kilo of glue." Glue, linseed oil, oil-cake, sawdust, shoe leather, soap, candle stubs—these were the food products of the blockade.

In the autumn of 1941 the city filled with new people: they fled in from the suburbs. Peasants were not allowed into the city. They stood around it in a ring with their cattle and crying children. At first, Leningraders would go out to them in search of milk and meat. By the winter of 1942, all these people had frozen to death. Then those refugees who had come with no belongings and had been put in schools and public buildings froze to death.

Then, those who had moved in from the southern districts of the city died. Leningrad had this kind of "internal evacuation." The Germans suddenly approached the Putilov factory. The families of its workers began to go hungry earlier than others. They had nothing with which to barter for extra food. And they died quickly.

Janitors lived well. They took ration cards from the dying, they obtained cards for evacuees, they gathered up things from empty apartments and traded them for food.

When the Germans came close to Leningrad, deadly panic spread among the Jewish population. The preceding era of denunciations made itself felt. Fear of neighbors, of co-workers emerged. In the buffet of the Pushkin House, where people socialized and drank hot water, the well-known specialist in 18th–19th-century Russian literature, Grigory Gukovsky, suddenly began loudly proclaiming that through his mother he was Russian, that he was Orthodox. Fear became pathological. The philologist Alexander Israilevich Grushkin appeared in the buffet with his cap cocked to one side, in a shirt belted with a Caucasian leather strap, giving everyone a military salute. He said that he could pass for an Armenian.

German intelligence, right up to winter 1941, reported increasing antisemitism in Leningrad, attacks on Jewish women in breadlines, and the passivity of the militia, which preferred not to intervene. Antisemitism was an extreme, animal manifestation of the general bitterness in the city during that first autumn of the blockade, in 1941. That general bitterness was so strong that the authorities feared mass uprisings by workers. When the blockade winter began, people were left alone with themselves, and life and death lost their national coloring.

When Leningraders received their bread, they always asked for a “little extra piece.” They would eat this extra piece on the spot. A special kind of blockade theft developed. Children suffered most from hunger. Boys would snatch bread straight from people’s hands and did not even try to run away. They would fall upon the bread and eat, eat, eat. Real thieves lay in wait in entrance halls. They would take food, ration cards, passports. There were also gangs of organized speculators, mostly from trade and provisioning organizations. The Leningrad NKVD recorded the contents of letters written by citizens.

Fragment of a letter: “There are people who haven’t felt hunger and are now going wild from plenty. Every cook working in a canteen has gold now. Or take the servicemen who work at city headquarters. They drive home in cars, bring food and drink it away.”

The NKVD report stated: “In the last ten days 10,820 such letters have been recorded, which is one letter per 70 residents of Leningrad.”

The trucks travelling into the city across the ice of Lake Ladoga brought bread, lard, meat, grain, sugar. Someone was distributing these thousands of tons of food. Writer Yuz Aleshkovsky: “In those days, for a slice of Krakow sausage you could get a Levitan, a Somov, a Kandinsky. For a kilo of fatback you could get a Rublev icon.” During the blockade, superb collections were formed out of things exchanged for food.

And finally, Smolny.

From the recollections of Gennady Petrov. During the war he served in the kitchen team of Smolny. In 1943 he would go to the front. His mother, Darya Petrovna, worked in the government cafeteria. In the southern wing of Smolny there was a canteen for the staff of the city party committee, the city executive committee, and department heads. There was also a so-called delegates’ canteen for ordinary employees. Each canteen had its own staff with special clearances.

In the staff canteen, bread lay on the tables without limit. By mid-November they began to carry it off. There were coupons for breakfast, lunch and dinner. These coupons came in addition to those that ordinary Leningraders had. Lunch always had three courses. Sugar, buns, pies.

And in the government dining room in the northern wing, there was absolutely everything. Fruit, vegetables, caviar, pastries. The bakery made elaborate cakes. Zhdanov and the chairman of the city executive committee, Pogosov, each had their own chef.

The service staff took meat, fish, butter, potatoes home from the canteen. The soldiers guarding Smolny were hungry. Those who worked in the kitchen scraped the crusts from the cauldrons and gave the soldiers these scrapings or leftover soup. Gennady Petrov recalls: “We arranged for our neighbor Olya to get a job at Smolny as a manicurist. Zhdanov had his nails done. Smolny had everything—electricity, water, heating, sewage.” The city had none of that.

From the memoirs of a daughter of a blockade survivor: “When I was a child my mother told me that during the blockade you could always barter near Smolny with ‘the party people’, as she called them: for a ring or earrings you could get a little onion or a can of stew.”

From another memoir: “After the war I asked a friend of mine, who had spent his childhood in the blockade, about hunger. ‘Hunger?’ he asked in surprise. ‘We ate normally. No one died of hunger.’”

This man’s mother worked in Smolny. He lived in a guarded building and during the whole blockade played only in the courtyard. They never let him out into the city. He saw nothing and knew nothing.

As early as autumn, people were going door to door asking: “Don’t you want to sell your dog to good hands?” In autumn they were already salting dog meat for the winter. It was clear that there would be famine. But no one could imagine its true scale. In winter, a cat would cost between 100 and 250 rubles. A medium-sized dog—300 rubles. But by November there were no cats, no dogs, no birds left in the streets. From a letter: “My father and I ate two cats, they’re so hard to find and so hard to catch. We keep watching for a dog, but there are no dogs at all.”

From memoirs: “I managed to get ration cards for the dietary cafeteria on Pavlovskaya Street. Some starving people crawled to the cafeteria. Others were dragged up to the second floor. Others could not close their mouths, and saliva ran from their open mouths onto their clothes. The women in the cafeteria did not eat. They carried food to their children or to those who could no longer walk. Into a single pail they took everything: two spoonfuls of porridge and soup. The soup was just water.” Mothers died before their children. They gave their portions to the children and died.

From the siege diary of geography teacher Vinokurov, March 1942: “A man stood in line at the cafeteria for about two hours, received soup and porridge according to his ration card. He managed to eat the soup, but the porridge remained. The waitress discovered that he was dead. The people gathered around did not leave. Everyone wanted to know who would get the porridge.” The author of this entry, teacher Vinokurov, was shot. His diary was used as incriminating evidence.

In the city’s scientific institutions, mass “staff reductions” were underway. Being fired was tantamount to a death sentence. The dismissed lost their ration cards.

But many employees were not receiving cards anyway. Near the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography there was an academic cafeteria. Those staff members who had no ration cards came there to lick the plates. Leaving the cafeteria, many were unable to fasten the buttons on their coats.

The first muscles to die off were those that worked the least. So legs lasted the longest.

But the brain was the very last to die. When arms and legs no longer moved, when there was no strength left to close the mouth, when the skin darkened and the teeth stuck out as if in a grin, the

brain kept working. People, barely able to hold a pencil, wrote philosophical essays, thought freely, drew, finished their doctoral dissertations. They showed extraordinary inner firmness, dying quietly but not giving in. This is what is called martyrdom.

Corpses lay in the streets. Soft parts were cut from the bodies lying there. The one who cut the corpse rarely ate the meat himself. He would either sell it or feed it to his loved ones to keep them alive. Academician Likhachev writes: “When a child is dying and you know that only meat can save him, you will cut a piece from a corpse.”

There were scum who killed people to sell their flesh. In Leningrad, people were afraid to let children into the street even in daytime.

In February 1942, more men were dying. Women began to die in March.

Klavdia Ivanovna Shulzhenko’s father died of starvation in the basement of the Officers’ House in February 1942. Klavdia Ivanovna refused to drag her father on a sled and bury him without a coffin. The burial team set their price: half a kilo of lard and a bottle of alcohol. The head of the Leningrad Officers’ House managed, on the fourth day, to find what the gravediggers demanded.

The corpses of those who had died of exhaustion were so dried out that they could lie for a long time. Families often did not bury their dead: they continued to receive ration cards for them. There was no fear of corpses, and there were no tears. Klavdia Ivanovna Shulzhenko’s father was buried at the Serafimovskoe Cemetery in a coffin, which was almost a miracle in the winter of 1942. The Serafimovskoe Cemetery, like the Piskarevskoe Cemetery, was entirely filled with mass graves. From July 1941 to July 1942, mass graves with a total length of 20 kilometers were dug in the city’s cemeteries.

In the clinics that issued death certificates, the diagnosis “from hunger” was not written down; various diseases were invented instead. That was the order.

The head of the State Sanitary Inspectorate of Leningrad, Nikitin, suggested mass cremation of bodies on pyres. It did not come to open pyres. From February 1942, corpses were burned in the furnaces of the Izhora works and the First Brick Factory.

In the first edition of his memoirs, Marshal Zhukov put the number who died of hunger at about one million. In later editions this figure was removed under the furious pressure of the former head of supply for Leningrad, Pavlov, who later climbed the career ladder. Today, estimates of the dead range from 1.1 million to 1.8 million.

From the siege diary of Nikolai Gorshkov: “Due to the onset of severe cold and a number of shortcomings in living conditions, there has recently been a high mortality rate among the civilian population.” The author of this uniquely dry and restrained wording was arrested in 1945 for hostile attitudes toward Soviet power. His siege diary was attached to the case file.

Klavdia Ivanovna Shulzhenko recalls: “Within two days we gave several concerts at a defense plant and at the front, which was no farther away than the plant. Late in the evening we returned to the Officers’ House, where a supper had been prepared for us—thin slices of bread and a pale drink proudly called ‘soufflé’. Our manager announced:

‘I’ve got hold of a wonderful musical film. I suggest: first the movie, then supper.’ The frames began to flicker on the screen. The heroes of the film kept meeting either in cafés or in restaurants or at formal dinners. We did not follow the plot. For us the main thing was what appeared on the

table. ‘God, look at those pastries,’ my neighbor whispered. ‘And what’s that, look!’ shouted our manager. ‘Apples, real apples!’

But the finale of the film killed us all: an enormous wedding table with a thousand hors-d’œuvres. We could not tear our eyes from the screen. From all sides we heard: ‘Projectionist, could you slow it down a bit?’”

Three musicians in Shulzhenko’s orchestra died of hunger.

From a blockade survivor’s recollections: “Spring 1942. I went to see Zhdanov on water-supply business. I barely made it, I was reeling from hunger. If I had seen lots of bread or even sausage there, I wouldn’t have been surprised. But there, on his desk in a bowl, lay bouche pastries.”

Bouche were pastries famous since old Petersburg days, exquisite and difficult to make.

On July 12, 1942, Klavdia Ivanovna Shulzhenko gave her five-hundredth concert of the blockade. On the stage of the Officers’ House. She was presented with cornflowers. Before that, her concerts were everywhere: in naval crews, in dugouts, in underground shelters, at factories. At the factories, after the concert, people did not applaud. They did not have the strength to applaud.

In 1942, Klavdia Shulzhenko was flown out to Moscow to shoot the film *Concert to the Front*. The screenplay was written by Alexei Kapler. In 1943, Kapler would be arrested for his love affair with Stalin’s daughter, Svetlana.

She did not let her son out of her sight. The experience of the first evacuation of children from Leningrad was tragic. Children were sent off without their parents in complete chaos. Many children were sent toward Pskov—in essence, straight into the path of the Germans. Trains carrying only children were bombed.

At the very start of the war, Shulzhenko almost lost her son. Her son Gosha was in Kharkov. Klavdia Ivanovna was from Kharkov. She had finished high school there. That was where she began her artistic career in a drama theater. In 1941, Klavdia Ivanovna sent her son to spend the summer with relatives in Kharkov. She herself was on tour in Yerevan. On the first day of the war she sent a telegram asking that her son be brought to the station at a certain time. When the Yerevan train arrived in Kharkov, the city was being bombed. No one was allowed off the train. Shulzhenko had a hysterical breakdown. She knew nothing about her son’s fate. On the sixth day the train stopped at a small station. Another train stood nearby. Shulzhenko read the destination sign absent-mindedly: “Kharkov–Leningrad.” The train started moving, windows slid past. Suddenly, in one of the windows, she saw Arkady Raikin’s face. He had been on tour in Kharkov. Raikin saw Shulzhenko and shouted: “Klava! Klava! Gosha is with me!”

When Kharkov was already being heavily bombed, Shulzhenko’s relatives had tracked down Raikin, and he took the boy from Kharkov to Leningrad. And most likely he saved the child’s life. Kharkov is one of the most terrible links in the chain of our defeats in 1942.

In 1942, Hitler abandoned the idea of taking Moscow. The main goal was the Donbass, the southern oil, the Caucasus. Soviet intelligence provided absolutely accurate information about this. Moreover, the Allies knew the German plans. Churchill passed this information on to Stalin. Despite all this, Stalin was convinced that the main events of 1942, as in 1941, would unfold around Moscow. First, because the Germans kept up to seventy divisions on the central sector of the front. Second, because they had conducted a successful campaign to mislead the Soviet leadership. They

managed to fool Stalin, to convince him that the thrust to the south was only a secondary operation. All the more so since Stalin wanted to believe that.

On May 12, against the backdrop of complete German readiness for a major offensive towards Soviet coal and oil, Soviet troops of the Southern and Southwestern Fronts, under Malinovsky and Timoshenko, launched an offensive to liberate Kharkov. The first three days of the offensive were successful. Soviet tanks approached to within twenty kilometers of Kharkov. On May 17, General Kleist's tanks broke through into the rear of our advancing troops. Intelligence had reported this threat even before the offensive. On May 17, Chief of Staff of the front Bagramyan asked Moscow to halt the offensive on Kharkov.

On May 17, Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky reported to Stalin twice about the need to stop the offensive.

Moscow urged them to "hold out bravely." On May 18, Stalin again demanded that the offensive continue. On May 19, the situation became catastrophic. On the 19th, Stalin agreed to stop the offensive and turn the troops against Kleist. But it was already too late. Too late. By May 28, the Germans had encircled three of our armies. The encirclement was completed with combined artillery and air strikes. Front-line reconnaissance man Boris Vitman recalls: "In that fiery whirlwind, even the dead found no rest. Along with the living, the blast waves hurled them about, tearing apart already mangled bodies. Then the tanks came, and behind them the machine gunners. Next to me, an unknown captain with a bloody bandage on his head rose up. He had a grenade in his hand. 'After me!' the captain shouted. Those who could stand rushed forward. We walked at full height, summoning our last strength and will, toward the tanks and the machine gunners. The captain fell before he could throw his grenade. By the evening of May 29, the columns of prisoners stretched for several kilometers. 'How many of you there are, my dears,' I heard a woman's voice, 'this is the second day you've been marching past us, and there's no end in sight.'"

There were 240,000 prisoners at Kharkov.

The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the German-Fascist invaders made Stalin, by his position, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, but it could not make him a professional military commander. Meanwhile, his habit of unlimited power made his interference in precisely the professional conduct of the war—into which countless human lives were drawn—inevitable. Stalin bears personal responsibility for the Kharkov cauldron, for the encirclements near Vyazma, Smolensk and Kiev. The millions of prisoners and Soviet soldiers and officers who died in encirclements are the bloody product of Stalin's management of the war in 1941 and 1942. In 1942, beginning with Stalingrad, the war passed into the hands of professionals.

After Kharkov, the Germans felt complete freedom of action in the south of the USSR.

On July 28, 1942, Stalin's Order No. 227 appeared, known as "Not a Step Back." Stalin said: "After their winter retreat, when discipline in the German troops had slackened, the Germans took harsh measures that led to good results." In other words, Stalin recalled Hitler's December 1941 stop-order. He continued: "The Germans formed 100 penal companies from guilty soldiers and ordered them to wash away their guilt in blood. They formed penal battalions from guilty officers and ordered them to wash away their guilt. They formed blocking detachments, placed them behind unreliable divisions and ordered them to shoot panic-mongers on the spot. Should we not learn from our enemies in this matter? I think we should." Order No. 227, by analogy with Hitler's stop-order,

introduced penal companies for enlisted men, penal battalions for officers, and blocking detachments behind everyone.

The native city of Klavdia Ivanovna Shulzhenko, Kharkov, had been occupied since October 1941. Before Kharkov was surrendered, all factory equipment, all grain reserves, all warehouse stocks had been removed, the power station and pumping station blown up. In the empty city 700,000 people remained. In early December 1941, an announcement from the Kharkov city administration was posted in the streets in three languages. The entire population had to be registered by December 8. Point 8 read: "Jewish residents are registered on special lists. Registration of Jews is conducted on special yellow sheets." The city sank into a quagmire of denunciations. "To all artistic institutions in the city of Kharkov. I propose that you carry out a second, thorough check of the staff and students of your institution in order to identify Jewish elements or those connected by kinship with Jews. Signed: Head of the Arts Sub-department, Professor Kostenko."

The building managers worked tirelessly. Even the director of the orphanage. In Orphanage No. 3 on Gubernatorskaya Street, Director Mitrofanov filled out a yellow sheet for three little girls, aged two and three. The city ghetto was located in the 10th district, near the tractor and machine-tool plants. In early January 1942, the entire population of the ghetto was shot in the Drobitsky Ravine.

On Chernyshevskaya Street there was a park of gas vans. The Hotel Kharkov housed torture chambers. In Kharkov, 100,000 people of various nationalities were killed and executed, 100,000 died of hunger, 120,000 were taken to Germany. Fifty-two citizens of Kharkov who saved Jews during the occupation were later awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations."

Actress Lyudmila Gurchenko recalls: "The main place of all events in the city was our Blagoveshchensky market. This is where the Germans staged public executions. The city's residents were driven to the market. A dense circle formed. Children were always placed at the front so they would watch. Men in their underwear, with boards on their chests reading 'Arsonist', 'Partisan', were led out of the trucks. And they were hanged. The first time, I didn't know what hanging was. I watched. I felt ill. The next time I already knew everything. I buried my face in my mother's belly, but suddenly I felt something sharp under my chin. With a sharp movement my face was turned toward the gallows. A German officer handled that. I was six, but I remember everything."

The scholarly library served officer-readers. At the History Museum, the Germans demanded that the "Gothic Hall" be opened within three days to show the Aryan influence on the Kharkov region. In June 1942 there was a full house at the Opera Theater: straight after *Swan Lake* the Germans left for their offensive on Stalingrad