

UDC 929+347.731.3+930.2+614.23  
DOI: 10.56871/MHCO.2023.69.29.011

## EXHIBITION “LENINGRAD PEDIATRIC MEDICAL INSTITUTE IN THE HARSH YEARS OF THE BLOCKADE” IN THE PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY OF ST. PETERSBURG

© *Galina L. Mikirtichan, Irina A. Savina*

Saint-Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University. Litovskaya str., 2. Saint-Petersburg, Russia, 194100

**Contact information:** Irina A. Savina — Director of the Museum. E mail: [iasavina@yandex.ru](mailto:iasavina@yandex.ru) ORCID ID: 0009-0007-3925-3696

**For citation:** Mikirtichan GL, Savina IA. Exhibition “Leningrad pediatric medical institute in the harsh years of the blockade” in the Presidential library of St. Petersburg. Medicine and health care organization (St. Petersburg). 2023; 8(1):129-135.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56871/MHCO.2023.69.29.011>

Received: 20.01.2023

Revised: 15.02.2023

Accepted: 21.03.2023

## ВЫСТАВКА «ЛЕНИНГРАДСКИЙ ПЕДИАТРИЧЕСКИЙ МЕДИЦИНСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ В СУРОВЫЕ ГОДЫ БЛОКАДЫ» В ПРЕЗИДЕНТСКОЙ БИБЛИОТЕКЕ САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГА

© *Галина Львовна Микиртичан, Ирина Александровна Савина*

Санкт-Петербургский государственный педиатрический медицинский университет.  
194100, Российская Федерация, г. Санкт-Петербург, ул. Литовская, д. 2

**Контактная информация:** Ирина Александровна Савина — директор музея.  
E-mail: [iasavina@yandex.ru](mailto:iasavina@yandex.ru) ORCID ID: 0009-0007-3925-3696

**Для цитирования:** Микиртичан Г.Л., Савина И.А. Выставка «Ленинградский педиатрический медицинский институт в суровые годы блокады» в Президентской библиотеке Санкт-Петербурга // Медицина и организация здравоохранения. 2023. Т. 8. № 1. С. 129–135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56871/MHCO.2023.69.29.011>

Поступила: 20.01.2023

Одобрена: 15.02.2023

Принята к печати: 21.03.2023

On January 18, 2023, St. Petersburg celebrated one of the most significant days in its history — the day when in 1943 The Siege of Leningrad was ended. The defense of Leningrad is forever inscribed in the history of Russia as an incredibly tragic and at the same time heroic event.

For 872 days, from September 8, 1941, The Siege of Leningrad lasted, which according to official data took the lives of more than 630 000 of its inhabitants, although, according to historians' calculations, this number may reach 800 000.

The ring of the enemy siege was finished as the result of the success of the Red Army's

Operation “Spark” (Iskra). It was planned since 1942 and began on January 12, 1943, the fighting was led by Marshals Georgy Zhukov and Kliment Voroshilov. Land-forces of the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts, supported by the Baltic Fleet aviation, decisively attacked the German army on the Shlisselburg-Sinyavinsky salient.

And on January 18 as the result of the Soviet offensive the city of Shlisselburg was liberated. A gap was formed in the siege ring, as a result of which land communications with Leningrad were restored.

It became possible to resume the supply of food and other necessities to the city. The situation of the inhabitants gradually improved. In fact, it was not so much a military as a humanitarian operation that saved hundreds of thousands of lives, who, probably, couldn’t hardly survive the second blockade winter.

However, the siege was still going on, a bombing and shelling of the city did not stop, people were still suffering and dying from severe malnutrition, avitaminosis and its complications. The siege ring was completely lifted only on January 27, 1944.

But the event of January 18 was extremely important, it was regarded as a psychological and moral victory, it gave people who lived in Leningrad joy and confidence in the inevitable victory over the enemy.

Together with all residents of the city, the staff of the Leningrad Pediatric Medical Institute (LPMI, now St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University) endured the years of blockade.

All the days and years of the war and siege our institute worked and fulfilled its tasks: to help the front, to train doctors, to treat and to save the lives of children and mothers, to conduct scientific and organizational work.

That is why for us, the university staff, the memorable dates related to the Great Patriotic War and The Siege of Leningrad are the most tragic, the most reverent and the most memorable.

On the eve of the 80th anniversary of the breakthrough of The Siege of Leningrad, we turned once again to the theme of the Great Patriotic War. For this date the Presidential Library opened the exhibition “Leningrad Pediatric Medical Institute in the severe years of the blockade”, prepared by the staff of the Presidential Library and the Museum of the History of St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University under the guidance of the Museum Di-

rector I.A. Savina; the design project was made by M.N. Netrebko. This exposition became the second joint exhibition project of SPbSPMU and Presidential Library, realized within the framework of the cooperation agreement between the institutions signed in 2022. The first project was presented in April 2022, when the Presidential Library opened the exposition “LPMI during the siege. Saving Children: Honor and Bravery of Leningrad Pediatricians”, also prepared by the staff of the Museum of the History of St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University.

The exhibition “Leningrad Pediatric Medical Institute in the severe years of the blockade” was inaugurated on January 18, 2023.

Yu.S. Nosov, General Director of the Presidential Library, spoke at the opening of the exhibition (Fig. 1). He expressed his hope that the exhibition will resonate with everyone who will see it, with representatives of different generations. He also noted the successful joint work with our university on preserving the memory of the war and the siege and suggested to continue this direction of activity.

Prof. D.O. Ivanov, Rector of the Pediatric University, addressed the audience with a welcoming speech (Fig. 2). He emphasized the uniqueness of LPMI, which carried out multifaceted work to save children in the harshest



Fig. 1. General Director of the Presidential Library Yu.S. Nosov

Рис. 1. Генеральный директор Президентской библиотеки Ю.С. Носов

conditions of the siege. The education of doctors was of great importance: during the war years there were 7 graduations (scheduled and early), about 1000 doctors were trained. He especially noted the dedication of the Institute's



Fig. 2. Rector of SPbSPMU Professor D.O. Ivanov

Рис. 2. Ректор СПбГПМУ профессор Д.О. Иванов

staff: "When you see on archive photos how children were helped in these conditions, how in unheated classrooms teachers made classes, students continued to learn medicine, you bow down to these people". He also recalled that very quickly the issue of evacuation of children arose, which was carried out with the participation of doctors of our university. More than 400 000 children remained in Leningrad, their rescue from hunger and disease, preservation of their lives became the most important task of LPMI staff headed by the chief pediatrician of the city A.F. Tur. He emphasized the importance of patriotic education of students on the example of the heroic feat of LPMI staff during the war and the siege of Leningrad.

Chairman of the St. Petersburg Archives Committee P.E. Tishchenko in his welcoming speech noted the documentary base of the materials presented at the exhibition (Fig. 3). He shared the memories of his relatives, his grandmother, who worked at the enterprises of the city and survived the siege. "Everyone tried to make their part, their contribution to the common Victory, — emphasized P.E. Tishchenko. — Teachers taught, doctors treated, everyone tried to do their best". He noted what a great importance for the defenders of the city was the restoration of street-car traffic. In conclusion, he expressed



Fig. 3. Chairman of the Archival Committee of St. Petersburg P.E. Tishchenko

Рис. 3. Председатель архивного комитета Санкт-Петербурга П.Е. Тищенко



Fig. 4. Director of the Archive of Historical and Political Documents of St. Petersburg V.V. Taradin

Рис. 4. Директор Архива историко-политических документов Санкт-Петербурга В.В. Тарадин

his willingness to continue cooperation with the Pediatric University. The director of the Archive of Historical and Political Documents of St. Petersburg, V.V. Taradin also confirmed this intention (Fig. 4).

Professor G.L. Mikirtichan, the Head of the Department of Humanitarian Disciplines and Bioethics of St. Petersburg State Medical University, emphasized that the main goals of the LPMI staff have always been to take care of mothers and children, to save children's lives, but when we talk about it, we should always take into account the efforts that were made to save them in those incredibly difficult conditions. She recalled that on German maps, the LPMI was listed as "Object No. 708" to be destroyed. The territory was shelled, some days 8–12 times a day, children had to be taken down to bomb shelters. There were no children on the territory of the Institute injured from shelling. Children suffering from severe malnutrition, rickets and other severe diseases spent the hardest winter of 1941–1942 in bomb shelters. And especially great role in the rescue of children played a qualified approach to the organization of nutrition and treatment. All this testifies to the high professionalism of the LPMI staff, their well-coordinated work, selfless devotion to their work.

Further, the director of the Museum of the History of SPbSPMU I.A. Savina conducted a tour of the exhibition, which occupied 24 posters placed on eight digital screens (Fig. 5). The posters presented wartime photographic documents stored in the SPbSPMU Museum's holdings and explanatory text. Each poster or group of posters reflected different aspects of LPMI activity during the years of the war: reorganization of the educational process, treatment and nursing of children, scientific research, activities on children's nutrition, preservation of children's, students' and staff's lives, etc.

A distinctive feature of this exhibition was the involvement of materials from the fund of the Central State Archive of Historical and Political Documents of St. Petersburg. These new-found evidences of the feat of the Pediatric Institute staff in those harsh years were first introduced into the scientific turnover and included in the present exposition. The search for these documents was also carried out by the museum staff with support of Prof. D.O. Ivanov, Rector of St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical

University, P.E. Tishchenko, Chairman of the Archives Committee, and V.V. Taradin, Director of the Archives of Historical and Political Documents of St. Petersburg.

I.A. Savina noted that all time of the war the Institute was headed by Prof. Yu.A. Mendeleva, a Bolshevik with pre-revolutionary experience, a major manager of maternal and infant health care. Thanks to her authority in the government and professional environment were created the necessary conditions for the implementation of all areas of activities of the LPMI staff. The administration of the Institute, party and Komsomol organizations used all available resources to maintain the morale of employees and faith in victory. On the initiative of Yu.A. Mendeleva the institute went to extreme measures — the majority of students were accommodated on the territory of the institute. For this purpose, the warmest rooms of the clinic, which were not damaged by artillery shelling, were re-equipped. Many employees were also accommodated in the departments of the institute. A medical nutrition point was organized, where students and staff received three meals a day,



Fig. 5. Director of the Museum of the History of SPbSPMU I.A. Savina

Рис. 5. Директор музея «Истории СПбГПМУ» И.А. Савина



Fig. 6. Tatiana Vitalievna Fomina

Рис. 6. Татьяна Витальевна Фомина

including vegetables from the Institute's subsidiary farm, as well as medical care, and the weakest staff were accommodated in a specially equipped hospital. Thanks to these measures it was possible to avoid heavy losses from hunger. By the spring of 1942, Yu.A. Mendeleva achieved the first (the best one) category of rations for students to restore their strength after the severe war winter.

In 1943, after the breakthrough of the siege of Leningrad, hospital nutrition standards were slightly increased, and the Institute was able to prepare a full menu for children of all ages staying in the Institute's clinics. An invaluable help in the organization of children's meals was the LPMI's subsidiary farm, created in the pre-war period. Vegetables and fruits were prepared in raw, dried and canned form.

All years of the war, scientific work did not stop, meetings of the Academic Council were held, articles were published, and dissertations were defended. The subjects of scientific research work were changed in relation to the tasks and conditions of the front-line city. The main topics were alimentary dystrophies and



Fig. 7. Rector D.O. Ivanov and T.V. Fomina

Рис. 7. Ректор Д.О. Иванов и Т.В. Фомина

avitaminosis, wartime traumatism, children's infectious diseases, the influence of the blockade on the female organism and fertility functions, etc. In 1943 the question of restoration of the Institute's destroyed economy, its buildings and territory arose. Staff and students took an active part in the restoration work, and mothers caring for their children were also involved.

Experienced pediatricians A.F. Tur, A.B. Volovik, E.I. Fridman, V.N. Ofitserov, G.A. Nikolaev, N.N. Keller, N.E. Surin, N.E. Berg and many others played a great role in the organization of care for children, their treatment and nutrition, nursing of newborns and premature babies, introduction of new approaches to the daily regimen, maintenance of physical and psychomotor development of children.

Almost the entire war in the clinic spent children of front-line soldiers and orphans. For them the Institute became their own home.

For two years, from June 1942 to June 1944, Tanya Fomina was treated in the hospital clinic for severe malnutrition and dyspepsia. She was born in Leningrad in May 1942. Last year she celebrated her 80th birthday and was invited to the opening of the exhibition as a witness of

those years. In her speech, she expressed her gratitude to the doctors who took her out and kept her alive. She dedicated a poem to this event, which she recited in the final part of her story (Fig. 6).

In the exposition of the museum "History of St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University" she found not only a photo of her attending physician, but also a picture taken in 1944, where she was among a group of children, already quite well-fed. In gratitude for the saved life Tatyana Vitalievna brought digitized photos of her family, poems dedicated to the months of treatment, and her first and most favorite toy to our museum.

All those present warmly welcomed T.V. Fomina, and the Rector presented her with a memorable gift (Fig. 7).

The exhibition demonstrated the heroic activities of the entire LPMI staff headed by Director Yu.A. Mendeleva and Chief Physician D.S. Tumarkin during the blockade. For all people who lived in Leningrad the day of January 18, 1943 became a significant date in the life of the city exhausted by the siege. According to the memories of the head of the Department of



Fig. 8. At the opening of the exhibition. Rector D.O. Ivanov, Vice-rectors V.I. Orel, E.N. Berezkina, I.D. Lyakhov

Рис. 8. На открытии выставки. Ректор Д.О. Иванов, проректоры В.И. Орел, Е.Н. Березкина, И.Д. Ляхов



Fig. 9. Museum staff M.N. Ntrebko, T.V. Karpova, I.A. Savina, V.I. Vetrov with the scientific Head of the museum G.L. Mikirtichan

Рис. 9. Сотрудники музея М.Н. Нетребко, Т.В. Карпова, И.А. Савина, В.И. Ветрова с научным руководителем музея Г.Л. Микиртичан

Propaedeutics of Childhood Diseases A.B. Volovik, since that time “communication with the big land was restored, delivery of all necessary things improved, there were fewer children with severe malnutrition and avitaminosis and condition of pregnant women and their lactation improved”.

The opening of the exhibition was attended by representatives of the administration of SPbSPMU, staff of the Department of External Relations and Information Policy, the museum “History of SPbSPMU”, faculty and students of the University (Fig. 8, 9).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Author contribution.** Thereby, all authors made a substantial contribution to the conception of the study, acquisition, analysis, interpretation of data for the work, drafting and revising the article, final approval of the version to be

published and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the study.

**Competing interests.** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Funding source.** This study was not supported by any external sources of funding.

#### ДОПОЛНИТЕЛЬНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ

**Вклад авторов.** Все авторы внесли существенный вклад в разработку концепции, проведение исследования и подготовку статьи, прочли и одобрили финальную версию перед публикацией.

**Конфликт интересов.** Авторы декларируют отсутствие явных и потенциальных конфликтов интересов, связанных с публикацией настоящей статьи.

**Источник финансирования.** Авторы заявляют об отсутствии внешнего финансирования при проведении исследования.