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# Norms and Survival in the Heat of War: Normative versus Instrumental Rationalities and Survival Tactics in the Blockade of Leningrad

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**Norms and Survival in the Heat of War: Normative versus Instrumental Rationalities and Survival Tactics in the Blockade of Leningrad**[*]

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ABTRACT

When war challenges civilian survival, what shapes the balance between normative and instrumental rationalities in survival practices? Increasing desperation and uncertainty can lead civilians to focus on their own material interests and to violate norms in the name of survival or gain—to the detriment of the war effort and of other civilians. Do norms, boundaries against transgressions, and considerations of collective interests and identities persist, and through what mechanisms? Using diaries and recollections from the 872-day Blockade of Leningrad (1941-1944)—an extreme case of wartime desperation—this essay examines how three forms of cultural embeddedness shape variation in the strength of norms against calculative, instrumental rationality. Proximity and empathy with others, the structure of norms and analogies to legitimate instrumental practices, and reflexivity vis-à-vis war and others' response interact dialectically with the war context to shape variation in violating norms and rationalizing transgressions. Theft of food and cannibalism, which involve tactics of survival or gain that also risk the well-being of victims (theft) or violation of a powerful taboo (cannibalism), demonstrate the weakness of norms on the margins but their power when core norms or other real, visible individuals are threatened.

Keywords: War; culture; rationality; survival tactics; norms; deviance; reflexivity.

### Norms, Utilitarian Calculation, and Surviving War

What are governing dynamics of social order beyond state power when war challenges institutions and norms, stretches state capacity, and elevates civilian desperation? When and how does utilitarian, instrumental rationality outweigh normative behavior in shaping civilians' survival strategies, and is there variation in shifts and consequent violations of norms in the name of utility? These are major issues for societies at war: when enough citizens pursue a materialist, individualist, instrumental logic of opportunism or free riding, states must expend additional resources to maintain order and to entice mobilization. On the one hand, war can favor collective, cooperative, normative behavior: individuals share fate against a common enemy in a conflict citizens can frame in normative terms (good versus evil, test of national character). Yet war creates material challenges to survival, and its violence can shock social control and narratives of normal, civilized behavior, reinforcing instrumental rationality and polarizing choices of self versus community: as per Primo Levi's (1985: 160) "law of the Lager [Nazi concentration camp]," "eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor." Widespread utilitarian tactics risk the individually rational but collectively irrational choice of the Prisoners' Dilemma, weakening the ability of state and society to organize defense and survival. Often the impact of war is assumed to work via material calculation and opportunism; only elites or "classes" act (e.g. Skocpol 1979), and "culture" is relegated to symbols and meanings in art or propaganda (e.g. Winter 1995). How civilians navigate competing rationalities, identities, and interests to cope with war's violence and uncertainty—thus affecting the social order—demands study.

War raises the issue of social order as few other contexts do, and extreme cases pit physical survival (material considerations) against social survival (norms, solidarity). Conventional stories of social control that feature structural and institutional power are not irrelevant but are inadequate. War can strain state capacity to maintain norms and social order; violence and material scarcity can alter incentives to the point where potential costs of punishment or benefits of obedience no longer matter much. Such a context also tests Smith's (2003, 2010) claim that norms matter to human nature. As war amplifies incentives to act opportunistically, norms can

function but need help. To address these issues I examine less institutionalized forms of embeddedness: proximity and empathy, narratives of norms, and reflexivity of self and context. I use a case whose extreme conditions should lay bare fundamental social dynamics: the "900 Days" Blockade of Leningrad (1941-44). In the first winter Leningraders faced severe shortages of food, electricity, heat, and water. At least 200,000 people died in January-March 1942; over 800,000 died by January 1944. Leningraders navigated the dead on streets and in apartments, waited hours in lines for paltry rations (when available), and braved–25° C temperatures to fetch water or go to work. They supplemented low-quality bread and weak tea with belts, glue, and cats or dogs. Survival drove some to steal food or eat human flesh. Yet compassion and selflessness were not marginal (Adamovich and Granin 1982; Dzeniskevich 1998). Anna Kondratieva bemoaned selfish behavior, theft, and dishonesty: "A reevaluation of material and moral value was exposed; for many, the understanding of legal and illegal and of norms of behavior changed." Yet her brother gave firewood for free to a starving family whose father had died (TsGALI 107/3/304/9-11).[1]

Variation in Blockade survival practices raises key questions about social interaction in extreme conditions, and by extrapolation how governmentality operates when it is most needed but vulnerable. This also returns us to norms, rationalities of practice, and human nature, with which Durkheim and Weber grappled. Norms might be central to humans, but people are embedded in contexts of material demands, institutionalized power, and the multifaceted "self." What if war makes legitimate tactics problematic or throws "normal" into disarray? How can norms operate when war's scarcity and misery reduce the impact of coercion and make utilitarian logic strong and encompassing enough that actors violate norms for material benefit or gain? How do wartime dynamics interact with embeddedness to compel actors to judge acts via instrumental or normative rationality? What accounts for variation in obeying or violating norms?

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[1] See the reference section for archives consulted.

*When the Stomach Meets the Conscience: Norms, Instrumental Rationality, and Shocks of War*
To the extent war's impact is studied, social science privileges structures, institutions, policies (e.g. welfare), or military relations (e.g. Huntington 1981; Janowitz 1971; Skocpol 1979, 1992; Tilly 1990; Weber 1976). Studies of political culture give too little attention to war (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963), and while some empirical narratives note war's impact on political meanings (e.g. Brandenberger 2002), this dimension remains underdeveloped theoretically. Some scholars have addressed how cultural categories and narratives affect interpretations of "interests," opportunities, and threats that shape international relations and the outbreak and conduct of war (Mann 1993; Smith 2005). War's impact on foundational myths and narratives has been studied (Centeno 1999; Faust 2008; McPherson 1998; Winter 1995), although the USSR is scandalously underappreciated (but see Tumarkin 1994; Weiner 2001). We are also less certain about what happens to categories, narratives, and survival practices as people confront war's deprivation and suffering, when choices include conformity with norms or their ritualistic pursuit—which in extreme cases such as the Blockade can be risky strategies—or various degrees of innovation, including marginal or fundamental transgressions of norms (Merton 1957).[2]

One analytic approach invokes a utilitarian logic of rational choice (Ackers 1990; Becker 1968; Birkbeck and LaFree 1993). Norms are instrumental rules that affect costs and benefits of action, the self as preferences is stable, and actors weigh fairly measurable costs, benefits, and probabilities of outcomes (Heckathorn 1990). As war alters resource availability and institutional capacity for social control, costs and benefits shift, and actors react accordingly. While a utilitarian analysis can explain wartime black markets or treason, it cannot adequately explain normative or altruistic behavior without assuming monitoring/sanction or risking tautology (e.g. normative behavior as interest-based). *Determinants* of costs and benefits are contextualized (as in

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[2] I focus on "transgressions" and innovations that justify violations or challenges of norms.

New Institutional Economics), but heuristics of decision-making and logics of practice are less so; instrumental rationality is presumed to be *the* predominant rationality rather than one of several (Polanyi 1944; Weber 1978). A less conventional, neo-Durkheimian approach treats norms and meanings as constitutive and injects symbolic and emotional dynamics into monitoring and sanction (Colomy and Granfield 2010; Elster 1989). People can act in a tactical, game-theoretic fashion, but they do so in a context of scripts, ritualized practices, roles, and narratives of the game (Bourdieu 1990; Friedland and Alford 1991; Hollis 1987; Montgomery 1998; Somers 1994; Wuthnow 1987). Actors reflexively monitor and negotiate meanings, roles, and practices (Giddens 1984), and conscience can support norms (cf. Kuntsman 2009 on the Gulag). Deliberation, reflection, and transgression interact dialectically with norms *and* material contexts, shaping the balance of norms and calculation and how to code acts or objects. Transgressions need not be utilitarian opportunism alone—they can involve innovation of justifications or even new norms. Norms involve legitimate-illegitimate and sacred-profane meanings that generate symbolic hierarchies, boundaries, and organizing principles of acts (Douglas 1966).[3] The legitimate-illegitimate pairing, institutionalized as legal-illegal, breeds tension when an act is justified on instrumental grounds (material benefit) but not normative grounds (illegitimate). Sacred objects and acts are governed by normative rationality and are beyond utilitarian use (Durkheim 1965 [1915]; Titmus 1971); tension emerges when the sacred is subject to instrumental calculation.

In peacetime, institutions and contexts are usually stable enough to support norms and the normative-instrumental balance (Archer 2010; Ellickson 1994).[4] Sanction, conscience, and re-

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[3]On sacred-profane in contentious politics, see Thompson's (1991) analysis of Anglican bishops' versus Thatcher's policies and Beck's (2002) discussion of market logics in British university pedagogy.

[4] The exception would be groups on society's margins. One could reframe these questions as what happens when war makes nearly everyone "underprivileged."

spect for sanctity keep questionable actions off most tactical menus; normative and instrumental rationalities operate in particular contexts (e.g. Zelizer 2005). Yet "objective environments have their own effects on dispositions, sometimes serving to cement them, but at other times—as when environments are suddenly transformed—leading to their transformation" (Vaisey and Lizardo 2010: 1611). Wartime deprivation and violence, uncertain survival, and examples of opportunism can shatter institutional reproduction, narratives of normal behavior, and relevancy of norms. States might formally increase social and resource control, but war strains state capacity and increased civilian desperation alters cost-benefit calculations to widen the scope of the "profane" and instrumental calculation (Elder-Vass 2007). Norms might be luxuries, and instrumental calculation dominates under scarcity, as McKean (2000) claims for subsistence agriculture. Centralized state control of resources and rationing also elevate calculation (e.g. counting ration coupons) and temptations for corruption. *Ceteris parabis*, war should increase transgressions based on instrumental, material calculation.[5] In this context, what, if anything, supports norms?

*Social Dynamics of Wartime Norms and Transgressions*
To accept that a general normative logic can operate at a core, tacit dimension of behavior does not entail cultural determinism (Haidt 2001, 2007). This is also no guarantee norms by themselves can withstand war's onslaught. If norms persist during extreme deprivation and disruption of routines, networks, and formal control, mechanisms with more structural autonomy might generate support and variation (an idea I extract from Smith 2003). To understand the operation

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[5] This mirrors Williamson's (1985) claim for why governance structures emerge. High sunk costs, information asymmetries, and "opportunists with guile" make actors think instrumentally about losses. This also mirrors Sorokin's (1975: chapter 3, 9) claim that starvation weakens normative reflexes and leads to instrumental behavior. My analysis problematizes Sorokin's model of gradual anomie.

of norms and variation in their strength, I suggest we turn to social dynamics and forms of embeddedness less formally institutionalized (thus less likely to weaken with institutional strains) and less likely to be utilitarian *a priori*: relational embeddedness (proximity and empathy); normative embeddedness (structure of norms and analogies to legitimate practices); and reflexivity.[6]

**Relational embeddedness: proximity and empathy, bodies and victims**. Our first dynamic involves proximity and empathy of others affected as instrumental calculation confronts normative prescriptions; as Adam Smith (2002 [1795]) noted, empathy and sympathy balance instrumental calculation. The power of norms and likelihood of transgressions vary with social distance or intimacy (social relation) or physical proximity of potential victims (Hirschi 1969; Rumble *et al* 2010). Stanley Milgram (1974: 32-36) noted that the closer and more "real" was the person being shocked—subjects had to push the "victim's" hand onto a plate—the less likely subjects administered dangerous shocks. Black (1976, 1993) claims law follows "morphology": greater intimacy means lower likelihood of using law or self-help. Following Collins (2004), Rossner (2008) showed how personal interaction (reduced social distance) between criminals and victims helps victims heal and reduces recidivism, as criminal and victim see each other as real people. Criminological studies note different perceptions of physical and victimless or white-collar crime: despite costs, white-collar crime, with distant or anonymous victims, does not evoke the same visceral reaction as physical crime (Gross 1979; Warr 1989). Proximity and empathy reduce the likelihood and impact of transgressions that bring pain or threat. Conversely, greater social distance means greater likelihood of transgression. People are more likely to transgress against strangers than those they know, and they are more likely to transgress against ab-

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[6] I address other dimensions of cultural embeddedness (sites, roles, objects) elsewhere. I also leave aside antipathy and post-war trauma narratives (Alexander 2004), although both deserve study.

stract bureaucratic entities than real people (Burt 2010: chapter 5). However, proximity can facilitate transgression by providing knowledge of and access to a victim's resources (Granovetter 1985). One synthesis of these points is that intimacy facilitates *marginal* transgressions but deters *fundamental* transgressions. A starving person is more likely to steal a whole ration from a stranger or organization than from family members, but might steal morsels from family.[7] Also, witnessing real-life suffering can increase the power of empathy and extend it to visibly suffering strangers; and stealing from organizations with no suffering human face becomes easier.

**Normative embeddedness: structure of norms and narratives**. In their discussion of ideational embeddedness, Somers and Block (2005) claimed ideas can have independent causal impacts on policy and practice when organized as coherent, explanatory narratives—in their case, an anti-welfare "perversity thesis" (see also Smith 2005 on narratives for pursuing war).[8] This raises the issue of whether norms might mutually support each other when organized in informal narratives of normal behavior, in a manner akin to other phenomena such as identities (Somers 1994). Core norms act as anchors (Bernstein 1990), and specific norms might survive when connected to other norms, such that violating one threatens others. Because people value certainty over risk (Kahneman and Tversky 1981), initial barriers will be greater for transgressions that seem to add to uncertainty, i.e. violating multiple norms or core norms. Transgressing marginal norms does not significantly increase normative entropy, but transgressing core norms threatens certainty. Similarly, simultaneous multiple transgressions are more difficult because of additive power of norms and greater chance of sanction; the greater force needed for transgres-

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[7] In rational choice, stealing scraps is less risky than stealing a ration—unless scraps are non-marginal.

[8] I follow Smith (2005) and Somers (1994): a "narrative" is an ordering of norms and meanings, justifications, and expected outcomes of following or violating them.

sion, the more likely it will not be repeated after reflection unless it shatters narratives. To see others stealing bread might create cynicism; to see others eating human flesh forces rethinking core norms of "civilized" behavior and whether norms are relevant. In fact, cannibalism is a good test: if utilitarian rationality dominates, cannibalism under desperation is not a deviation (Petrinovich 2000). If norms and narratives matter, connected norms about human dignity and civilized behavior might support this taboo. Note that these narratives are not as formally structured as open discourses (cf. Skocpol 1985). While not formalized, a general narrative could be revealed in a dialectical relation with context, when norms are invoked in contested politics or challenged in a baptism of fire such as war (e.g. Garland 1990).[9]

On the other hand, narratives can aid transgressions by providing extended analogies to legitimate practices. Mary Douglas (1986) claimed institutional legitimation works via analogies: conventions are reified when framed as analogous to natural processes. Neoinstitutionalism notes how organizational actors mimic seeming solutions to problems and uncertainty (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). If a transgression has a reasonable analogy to a legitimate practice, rationalization through extension eases transgression. This can allow a utilitarian rationality for one set of practices to bleed into other practices. For example, individuals more active in shadow economies or corruption are more likely to act in a utilitarian fashion because this strategy is available and legitimated through experience; there is a lower barrier in considering and reflecting on transgressions. However, this has limits: potential solutions to challenges such as starvation might be too "distant" or lacking a strong enough analogy to be of use. Eating cats might be considered profane in peacetime, but desperate circumstances might make it acceptable because one can extend an existing legitimate practice that allows a potential analogy. Cats may be closer to humans than

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[9] This risks tautologies of "revealed preferences" of economics *if* we assume narratives are structured exactly as revealed in decisions. If we accept norms interact dialectically with contexts, the risk is less.

cows, but they are still non-human; eating a cat, then, is easier than eating another human. In short, we expect marginal transgressions easier because of less connectivity with core norms and greater likelihood of legitimation through extension of existing legitimate utilitarian practices.

**Embedded in event *and* self: reflexivity**. Reflexivity contingently mediates context, in part acting as a prism refracting the previous two dynamics. As an examination of the self that can act back on identity, interests, and practices, it also brings together the event (i.e. war), others' responses, and one's sense of self in relation to these (cf. Archer 1995, 2010; Giddens 1984; Mead 1934; Monroe 2004; Sewell 1996). Shocks or trauma of an event weaken routines and power relations to trigger reflexivity (Callera 2003).[10] Reflexivity then operates dialectically with war, others' tactics (including transgressions), one's own tactics, and norms. As war makes actors face experiences, choices, and responses that are harmful, contemptible, or unthinkable, individuals reflect while deliberating transgressions or after the fact.[11] How individuals code *others'* behaviors, perhaps as proxy for their own, contributes to framing war, identities, norms, self, and even human nature: i.e. whether humans are inherently corrupt, virtuous, or powerless. This process can reinforce or hamper norms as people redefine understandings of themselves and the human condition—especially if one's or others' coping tactics contradict norms of legitimate behavior. When civilians frame war as hopeless and others' behavior as uncivilized (e.g. rampant opportunism), norms might weaken as civilians consider any moral behavior useless. Serious reflection might occur after the accumulation of troubling observations, choices, and trauma force individuals to ask about the relevancy of norms and to question who they are as human beings. Alternatively, stories of victories or heroism and examples of civilized behavior (e.g. altruism)

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[10] Extreme trauma can overwhelm reflexivity and create numbness (Mills and Kleinman 1988).

[11] Here networks enter: one best observes behaviors in one's network, which can enforce norms or opportunism. Note that proximity and empathy are not reducible to networks.

can make norms seem feasible or natural and rekindle them (e.g. Campbell 2003). Atrocities might breed hatred and support for norms as resistance; opportunists are traitors to civilized ideals and will be punished. In this case, actors might frame themselves in a struggle against dehumanization, what Levi (1985: 40-41, 119-121) called "the power to refuse our consent." However, we should be careful: actors might compartmentalize thinking such that war appears as a separate existential issue or "master frame" or unconscious aggregation of other reflections.

In sum, we expect transgressions are easier 1) if they are less likely to affect a real person directly or do not harm others with whom the transgressor has empathy/intimacy, 2) if they can be rationalized as extensions of legitimate practices (e.g. eating a cat versus eating another person, as a cat is closer to a cow than a human), 3) if they are not strongly embedded in or linked to other non-utilitarian norms, and 4) if war is framed as desperate and hopeless and humans as inherently weak or uncivilized. Transgressions are harder in opposite cases.

## NORMS, CALCULATION, AND WAR: FOOD IN THE BLOCKADE OF LENINGRAD

As an extreme case of wartime challenge, the first winter of the Blockade of Leningrad (1941-1942) can elucidate fundamental rationalities of practice (Todorov 1996: 27-29). Concretely, I examine survival tactics related to normal classification and use of "food." For our concrete case, discerning the structure of narratives and potential analogies to legitimate practices is tricky given the closed nature of Soviet politics (Kuran 1995).[12] Some norms are normal for Western modernity, e.g. respect for the innocent; many Soviets believed victims of the Terror or collectivization somehow deserved that fate (Thurston 1996). Other norms stemmed from formal discourses; some studies suggest a correlation between popular norms and those of the Soviet state, visible in public dissatisfaction when officials and elites did not live up to stated ideals (Kotkin 1995; Davies 1997). Creating an alternative Soviet modernity meant instilling collective, anti-capitalist norms in which speculation was immoral, collective identity and interests were superior to indi-

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[12] This overview cannot be comprehensive; I condense insights from wide scholarship.

vidual profit-seeking, and social justice was central. "Civilized" Soviet behavior meant hygiene, efficiency, literacy, disciplined behavior and work, collective identity of class and Soviet *patria*, and the like as part of the modernity project many in the Party, state, and working class followed (Hoffmann 2003). Leningrad was also perceived as the carrier of enlightened, high-brow culture, as it was before the Revolution (Clark 1998). Yet Stalin's repressive, atomizing techniques and a shadow economy oriented to survival and opportunism could legitimate instrumental behavior as resistance to collective norms, and stealing state property, drinking heavily, and the like at times were resistance tactics (Filtzer 1986; Osokina 2001). Concerning food and goods, theft and robbery were illegal, and in the Blockade stealing scarce food meant denying it to others and risking their lives. For consumption, legitimate "food" included grains, fruits, potatoes and usual vegetables, and meat from livestock (chicken, pork, beef). Household pets were in a gray zone, closer symbolically to humans. The ultimate consumption taboo was human flesh.

Regarding the perception of war, popular framing shifted from early bravado and confidence in quick victory (norms strong), to despair as Blockade suffering increased (utilitarian logic ascendant), to physical and moral survival as resistance to Nazi violence (norms reemerge) (Hass 2009). The rapidity and scale of the German attack shocked narratives of how war should play out. Leningraders believed in Red Army strength, but official news, censored and thin, could not hide knowledge of losses and the Red Army in retreat (GMMOBL Akt 76-07, vol. 1/30-31). This was reinforced when the Germans began the Blockade in September 1941 and commenced intensive bombardment. The transformation from ordered pre-war civilian life to disordered, destructive Blockade weighed heavily in diary accounts, most of which began with calm, warm June days and expectations of rest and material plenty (such as it was). The shock of war was followed by shocks of opportunism when a minority used cold, uncivilized tactics to survive or prosper in Leningrad's moment of truth (e.g. TsGALI 107/3/323/56). While state power did not vanish completely, state capacity to maintain order was compromised as local officials faced additional tasks of rationing, enforcing stricter public order, handling civilian movement, and watching for spies and deserters (Lomagin 2002)—while they too were starving

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and coping with deprivations. While state power to investigate and punish remained, investigators were often playing catch-up with theft, cannibalism, and the like, and local authorities were also concerned with anti-Soviet conversations than with food theft or other *material* practices (cf. Lomagin 2001).

In the spirit of *verstehen*, I use a qualitative analysis of Blockade-era diaries and interviews author Daniil Granin conducted with survivors in the late 1970s (which he later gave to archive TsGALI). I performed an exhaustive analysis of 98 diaries and over 100 detailed recollections stored in archives. Some survivors gave diaries to the local Party archive (TsGAIPD) when the regime gathered material on the Blockade during Khrushchev's thaw in the early 1960s. Some gave diaries to Granin in the 1970s; others or their families kept diaries until the USSR collapsed, when they published them or gave them to the Museum of the Defense of Leningrad (GMMOBL archive). For his interviews from the late 1970s, Granin and colleagues asked open-ended questions primarily about survival strategies, but at times about state and Party activities, death, work, and general events and observations. Interview contents were similar to those in diaries, and narratives do not conform to official propaganda: cannibalism, corruption, opportunism, and even rape appear.[13] The amount of detail varied between diaries or interviews; some were quite detailed and had entries for nearly every day of winter 1941-1942, while others were more terse (but no less informative). While not as rigorous as formal ethnography, diary accounts reflect what these people believed they witnessed and perceived as crucial to this event; keeping a diary or actively remembering events provides insights into how reflexivity and framing operate. For analysis, I use a close examination of data, similar to an ethnographic analysis in placing

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[13] Kseniia Polzikova-Rubets' memoirs, published in 1955 (before Khrushchev's thaw), conform to the formal heroic narrative. A diary she deposited in TsGAIPD (4000/11/93) conforms to a version her family published in 2000; it is darker, with details of death, suffering, and pessimism. Granin's interviewees complained about how the Party misused the Blockade for propaganda.

theory and data in a dialog, to create a picture of survival dynamics. Ascertaining motives, norms, and narratives is not straightforward, and this requires following words and deeds to detect whether an underlying pattern of connected norms emerges. This entails analyzing stories or observations people put to paper, descriptions and interpretations of practices and events, language used, and possible counter-factuals (i.e. possible alternative choices, such as acting altruistically rather than opportunistically or vice versa). While I used a rudimentary coding scheme inductively to organize data, I use an historical equivalent of thick description or "historical ethnography" to let actors' words elucidate logics of practice. I cite passages that best illustrate tendencies observed, while consciously trying to avoid cherry-picking data.

To try to ascertain validity of data, I followed claims about events, contexts, and tactics to note whether inconsistencies were strong enough to call that account into doubt. Obviously, no diary is free of subjective framing; but the goal was to discover actors' rationalities in particular contexts from what they recorded and how they framed Blockade life. Diarists and interviewees were also open about what *others* did and said, and such comments might reflect how diarists thought about their own decisions and behavior. Leningraders might not admit to stealing bread (but some did) or considering cannibalism, but their reactions to accounts of theft and cannibalism say something about their norms and rationalities and the dialectical relation between self and context. Further, in his studies of 1930s diaries, Hellbeck (2006) suggests diarists did not always hide "subversive" thoughts but used the Party's call for openness for self-criticism and improvement. Finally, while the NVKD/KGB presence was real, we should resist the Cold War assumption that Soviets were dupes or hid their thoughts. Soviets often took seriously the meaning and mission of Soviet civilization and criticized officials (Kotkin 1995; Thurston 1996).[14]

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[14] Granin's interviewees were so open about horrors that Granin and colleagues became physically ill and censored materials on their own (Simmons and Perlina 2002: 217-218, endnote #17).

I focus on food in that first winter, when deprivation was the most extreme. Bread had the highest symbolic and material value: it represented *and* facilitated survival and was a key means of exchange and store of value, as Leningraders traded goods for bread at the *rynok* (collective farmers' market). I explicitly structure the discussions that follow according to severity of transgressions as revealed through narratives, and according to principles of proximity and empathy. I portray reflexivity and its impact implicitly, through the language of accounts and issues raised.

*Obtaining and Distributing Food*

A key dilemma of the Blockade—as in the Soviet Civil War and World War II (Moskoff 1990)—was that authorities did not have enough food for a siege (Pavlov 1958). Despite increased food control, rations declined to a nadir in December 1941: 250 grams of bread for essential workers, 125 grams for all others. As famine developed, the growing material and symbolic value of food was reflected in time Leningraders put into obtaining it and in diary space dedicated to recording ration levels and related despair. Leningraders guarded ration cards, as losing them was a death sentence; some revealed this symbolic power by leaving unused ration coupons (*talony*) in diaries bequeathed to archives or families. Obtaining scarce food also raised instrumental rationality and a focus on individual material needs (or gain). Rationing was strict, forcing Leningraders to count their ration coupons and calculate how much food one could and should obtain at a time. Assuming stores had food—never guaranteed—one problem of obtaining several days' food at once was that this created the temptation to eat it all at once, leaving several days without food. Rations were so low that some families would leave a dead member's corpse in a cold room rather than report the death, because they could continue to use the late person's ration cards. Leningraders were initially ecstatic when authorities announced the bread

Olga Berggolts, celebrity radio poet in the Blockade, was arrested in 1939, yet she wrote critically how the truth of Leningrad was hidden, as it was in the Terror (Berggolts 2010: 62, 78-79).

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ration would rise on December 25, 1941; the failure of more bread to appear increased negative attitudes to the war and authorities (Lomagin 2005: 329-332). This was also during the battle for Moscow, when the survival of the USSR seemed bleak. And so Leningraders devised tactics to obtain food. Some were legal, such as seeking work at enterprises with better rations. Other tactics risked violating norms and boundaries, and deliberations and reflections on acts were grounded not only in calculation but also in considerations of norms and legitimacy. If the discussion of proximity/empathy, narratives and reflexivity is correct, we expect these transgressions in decreasing likelihood (opportunity costs taken into consideration): using networks and status as a "cheap" extension of the shadow economy; using the *rynok* (farmers' market), a site of legal trade where speculation was normal, if illegitimate; theft from organizations that did not involve an immediately visible victim; and direct theft from another person.

Using networks and status-based privileges, from patronage to privileged access to closed cafeterias, was a tactic around as long as the Soviet command economy existed, and Leningraders with access used these when possible. Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, widow to a famous physicist, relied on her own resources until it became apparent that by herself she would not survive, at which point she used connections to appeal to Leningrad Party boss Andrei Zhdanov. She sent letters to Zhdanov and asked her friend high up in the artists' union to approach him. Zhdanov eventually sent a basket of food (RNB 1015/57/175). If networks created a closed situation, one might not see the suffering of others ultimately deprived of food because of network and status games. Yet even rudimentary reflexivity could balance this somewhat—if not enough to stop the use of networks and status, at least to evoke shame in the Blockade context. Assistant manager Aleksandr Kedrov, who used his ties to one "P.M." to obtain beer, wine, sprats, and other food, was once invited to a special celebration for a Hero of the USSR. This celebration (on NKVD premises) had above-average rations, yet Kedrov did not enjoy the evening. He not only wrote of how much food was available; he admitted his own and others' shame. Guests consumed their own food and that from each others' plates or greedily and overtly pocketed bread rolls. Kedrov had difficulty looking at others, who from shame did not meet each others'

glances (TsGAIPD 4000/11/44/105). Generally, networks and status evoked outrage from those excluded. Schoolteacher Tatiana Kartomysheva wrote vehemently of doctors who refused to give milk to weak children, claiming they would die anyway; they gave that milk to acquaintances' children (GMMOBL Akt 315-90/56). Favoritism by doctors, charged to care for all and especially to innocent children, had clearly crossed into illegitimacy. Worker Ivan Savinkov condemned a "food aristocracy" (cafeteria servers, guards, and administrators) who took extra rations and stood out as well-fed (TsGAIPD 4000/11/99/59).

When networks and formal rules provided too little food, one alternative was *rynok* trade. Trading was legal unless speculation (prices over state levels) was involved, although enforcement was lax. Exchange was more often in kind (bread) than in rubles, and many diarists noted market value of goods, fixing dates and prices and recording fluctuations; this could cover an entire page. On January 2, 1942 Nina Kobyzeva noted values at the start of 1942—350-450 rubles for a kilo of bread, 25 rubles for a pack of cigarettes, 100 grams of butter for 250 rubles, and so on—to which she added that 200 grams of millet meant "six days of life" (GMMOBL Akt 76-07, vol. 1/63-64). Surplus bread for sale in a starving city, which profited *rynok* sellers at the expense of desperate Leningraders, made *rynok* exchange an exercise in profanity, especially after 25 years of anti-capitalist ideology. Yet to avoid death, Leningraders had to trade watches, books, and personal goods for expensive bread. For a time Leningraders defended a sacred core of norms—survival of oneself and loved ones—by using profane *rynok* exchange. In fact, the need to turn to the *rynok* could strengthen core norms. Academic Dmitrii Kargin (2000: 38) echoed the complaint of many when he damned "millionaires" profiting from *rynok* trade. In February 1942, Yelena Averianova-Fedorova lost her and her mother's ration cards and would not receive new cards for two weeks. For 15 days she spent 1365 rubles, an enormous sum, and traded valuables (TsGALI 107/3/330/40-41, 48). She did not go to the *rynok* again, even when close friend Fedia wrote from the front begging for tobacco; months before she had bought him food and clothing and made the dangerous journey to the front to deliver them! Varvara Vraskaia had not considered trading belongings for food until she saw daughter Irina growing weak in No-

vember 1941. She raised the idea with her husband, a professor, who rejected it outright: "Personal belongings cannot be squandered. Not only during war but also after, for a long time we will not be able to buy ourselves anything decent. You need to tighten your belt, [Irina] will put up with it, and when the Blockade is lifted we will feed her" (RNB 1273/13/18).

Leningraders traded at the *rynok* because they had little choice and because this did not seem to threaten others directly, even if it rewarded theft and speculation. Yet what if one had little to trade? The next transgression was various forms of theft. The least proximity and empathy involved stealing from organizations—like white-collar crime, easier to commit because of the lack of a readily visible victim. This was also an extension of a pre-war logic: state property was everyone's property, hence no one's, and so such theft did not directly target a concrete individual, even if it had indirect but concrete victims. Much food arrived at the *rynok* in this way: police and the NKVD discovered groups of thieves with stashes of millions of rubles in hard currency, gold, furs, and jewelry, all gained by selling food stolen from depots, schools, and hospitals (TsGA 7384/36/128, 148, 186).[15] More mundane theft from faceless organizations could be an easier task. Aleksandr Burianov, Party instructor and propaganda activist, described taking more than his ration of bread at a *stantsionar* (a special medical facility) in February 1942:

> I have ration cards in my hands. The head doctor…doesn't demand them at the moment. We did not restrain ourselves, we walked to the bakery and illegally ate 400 grams [of bread]—we take the risk and keep quiet…[Party member Stingof] proposed giving ration cards and promised to double our rations. No one believes his words. Promises from both

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[15] I leave aside as a special case those groups that constantly stole food for profit. They had proximity to scarce food, experience in the shadow economy (and were arrested), and were in contexts privileging instrumental rationality (e.g. fulfilling Five-Year-Plan targets, which inculcated instrumental rationality).

sides are never fulfilled. It was necessary to eat additional food from the cafeteria (TsGAIPD 4000/11/19/12).

At Leningrad's sausage factory, one shopfloor manager admitted workers stole meat—early in the Blockade, 30 of 45 workers-in-training were fired for theft, because "every person had a family and wanted to take something home, and so a person is tempted by a piece of pork or meat, and is caught, and for this he is taken to court." Of course, not stealing had grave consequences. Younger workers, unlike seasoned veterans, were not used to eating raw meat off the production line; they stole less and "starved and died" (TsGAIPD 4000/10/628/2-3).

One egregious form of visible robbery was stealing bread or ration cards on the street or in bread lines. An older woman or child would receive their bread, which a male would steal. Too weak to run off, such thieves would eat the bread in front of the victim, demonstrating in horrific fashion that the victim's means of survival were forever gone. One response to such a blatant tactic was swift, merciless, and spontaneous popular justice: bystanders would fall on the thief and beat him senseless or even to death. This was no calculated act of monitoring and sanction; it was a visceral reaction against this blatant violation of civilized norms and survival. Engineer L. A. Khodorkov recorded one moment in January 1942: in a bread line, a 35-year-old male snatched a woman's 200 gram bread ration after she had received it, for which she likely stood in line many hours in the cold. The male started to eat the bread in front of the crowd, which responded by attacking him. Despite being beaten, the male continued to eat the bread (TsGALI 107/3/322/17). Other forms of theft evoked visceral reactions: thieves who ransacked apartments while inhabitants hid in bomb shelters were "marauders" (e.g. TsGALI 107/3/411/6), regardless of whether such theft was opportunistic or desperate.

And not all theft was opportunistic. Leningraders could rationalize or forgive minor theft by starving acquaintances (Yarov 2009). Aleksei Evdokimov entrusted his ration cards to his neighbor Marusia. She once cheated him of small amounts of food, but he forgave her: "She has been mean to me, but she also prolonged the lives of two children and herself" (GMMOBL

1p/30/75). One police chief recalled how one woman had been in three hospitals, lost her passport, and returned home to find her children dead and others living in her apartment. She had to steal food to survive. Such "criminals from need must be returned to an honest life instead of jail" (TsGAIPD 4000/10/372/7). Konstantin Buldakov, head of the city court, claimed people who stole bread often "did this from hunger…considering such an enormous city, considering such horrible hunger, these were a handful of occurrences, at a time when people were eating each other, these occurrences were still a handful" (TsGAIPD 4000/10/815/10). Conscience could reinforce the norm against theft when it was linked to other norms and narratives or signs of moral status. Irina Korzhenevskaia was tempted to steal pasta from her neighbor, a doctor, but did not: the doctor was a good person and was good to her son, and she had a daughter herself. Korzhenevskaia even felt the need to cleanse herself by reminding the doctor of the macaroni. While Korzhenevskaia admitted the power of temptation, she knew it was illegitimate: "The animal in me whined tragically—why did I tell the doctor of that [macaroni]…But a person must still struggle…" (TsGALI 107/3/305/15). Boris Prusov recalled how one morning his family found bread reserves gone. His mother knew his young cousin Olya had stolen the bread, but redemption was possible: "Admit that hunger made you eat it! Olya! I won't do anything to you!" Olya confessed and did not steal again (TsGALI 107/3/391/22-23). Unloading supply trucks at the Finland Station, Yelena Averianova-Fedorova noticed a large amount of bread unguarded. The temptation to steal was great, "but my hands did not move and my conscience did not let me, and it was difficult to look at all of this [bread]" (TsGALI 107/3/330/54). Zoia Bernikovich and a friend worked a factory garden plot in mid-1942. Hungry and alone in the garden, they resisted the opportunity to steal vegetables: "We simply thought, No! They trust us, let us on to factory territory, how could we steal? That would be thievery" (TsGALI 107/3/336/11).

*Norms, Calculation, and Consumption: From Cats to Cannibalism*

When bread and other "normal" food became too scarce in that first winter, Leningraders had to use unorthodox sources: for example, a jelly (*studen'*) made out of joiner's glue, boiled leather

belts, and *zhmykh* (pressed seed husks), among other forms. Leningraders had no problem mentioning these non-traditional types of "food" in a casual manner, without much reflection on this deviation from traditional consumption, and this is significant in the context of this discussion. While eating glue jelly signified the depths of suffering and challenge to survival, these forms of "food" did not evoke outrage or questioning of the nature of survival in and of themselves. However, animate objects provided more valuable nutrients *and* potential obstacles to consumption because of an interesting dynamic of classifications, norms, and bodies. Eating glue in itself did not seem to be a transgression (and so bad was famine that Leningraders described glue jelly as "tasty"); glue had no sanctity to be defaced. Yet expanding bounds of what could be consumed risked making other sacred objects profane and committing illegitimate and immoral (possibly illegal) acts. Desperate hunger and the increasingly dismal conduct of the war made it acceptable to expand "consumable" to cats, dogs, birds, and other animals: while domestic pets enjoyed empathy, they were non-human. Consuming these non-traditional sources of food signaled increasing material desperation, and the narrative of "normal" behavior was unraveling: Leningraders repeatedly noted in diaries and recollections the disappearance of cats and dogs in more than a perfunctory manner (unlike blasé references to glue jelly). Even if expedient, this was a significant shift in survival tactics even for the Blockade. Framing "food"—what was consumed and reactions to it—involved remaking the narrative of desperate survival and new boundaries between normative and instrumental, sacred and profane (and even evil). Noting this trend, Leningraders implicitly (sometimes explicitly) commented on Blockade profanity and desperation.

One woman at the Institute of Food claimed Leningraders would not eat rats because rat meat quality was inferior to that of dogs and cats, although "psychological disgust, as well as quality of taste, possibly played a role in evaluating rat meat" (TsGALI 107/3/302/27). She was not entirely correct. Evgeniia Manonian wrote how a railroad conductor lost his family's ration cards, and for fifteen nights caught rats for his wife to fry (TsGALI 107/3/374/6-7). This said, diary accounts rarely mention consuming rats, despite their presence in the city. Cats and dogs were different. For some Leningraders eating cats was a symbolic shock; diarists uniformly made

sure to note cats disappearing in late 1941. Some accounts painted this tactic as illegitimate. Nina Pekina said, "when hunger began and, as is said, people ate cats, it never entered our heads that one could eat cat" (TsGALI 107/3/386/33). Glafira Korneeva took offense at eating cats and dogs: such people were "*koshkoedy*" (cat-eaters) and "*sobakoedy*" (dog-eaters), an extension of profane *liudoedy* (cannibals) (TsGAIPD 4000/11/51/21). Serafima Evdokimova refused to eat her aunt's soup despite being "horribly hungry" because she knew it contained cat meat (Ober-derfer 2000: 38). Other Leningraders admitted both the troublesome nature of eating cats and that they had committed such an act. Irina Popova's cat Foma died early that winter: "When people started catching cats for food, Iurka…from apartment #22 hit [Foma] in the spine but did not kill him. Foma came home and died in the arms of Mother, who loved him and whom he loved." Not long after, though, she too was hungry and desperate enough to eat cutlets from cat meat (TsGALI 107/3/310/24, 30). Varvara Vraskaia killed a cat for soup. She told her husband she asked a neighbor to do the deed, and she told her daughter they were eating rabbit (RNB 1273/13/18). Galina Babanskaia's family killed their beloved cat on January 13, 1942 (a date she never forgot); her husband, not attached to the cat, did the "execution" (TsGALI 107/3/333/9).

One of the stronger comments on the normative dimension to eating cats comes from art-ist Olga Matiushina and Hermitage employee Olga Mikhailova. In the account she left for the Communist Party during Khrushchev's thaw, Matiushina related how elderly neighbor Tatiana lived alone with her cat Murzik.[16] Tatiana's neighbors said Murzik would provide five days of soup. Tatiana rejected the idea, but a few days later killed Murzik, as neighbors would eat him when she died anyway. Yet she saw Murzik's eyes everywhere. When she failed to come out of her apartment, superintendent and neighbors entered and found the soup untouched and Tatiana dead—the ultimate reaction to this transgression (TsGAIPD 4000/11/68/116-119). Olga Mikhai-

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[16] Her "diary" reads like a novel: she uses an omnipotent narrator to relay details she could not have known. Yet this does not invalidate her "diary" as a reflection on expediency and norms.

lova claimed one childhood friend killed herself in the Public Library after her mother ate her cat: "She [the friend] understood everything was already over, everything in life was over, that earlier principles and norms in their family were destroyed, and even her beloved mother did it [violated norms]…Clearly she understood that already an internal degradation was taking place and would go further and further" (TsGALI 107/3/336/18-19). Eating her cat was less distressing than what it represented for emerging logics of survival: normative boundary after normative boundary was being crossed, unraveling the narrative of what normal, civilized behavior and practices was supposed to be. If cats now, what was next? As problematic as it was to eat domestic animals, friends of the family, this paled in comparison to the immorality and profanity of the Blockade and broader war, in which German atrocities featured heavily.

An interesting commentary on this point was how Zianida Ignatovich concluded her memoirs with a bitter, tongue-in-cheek appendix entitled "Blockade recipes," such as "Meat soup from domestic or stray animals" (TsGALI 107/3/302/52-53). Of course, not all were sympathetic to cats and dogs. Vera Kostrovskaia found a fat cat in her doorway at her educational institute: "Children are starving, but they [cats] are sated." She took the cat to "specialists" for 2.5 kilograms of meat and 300 grams of fat (TsGALI 157/1/28/21). Worse was a cat belonging to Kostrovskaia's corrupt and well-fed institute director L. S. Tager. Tager admonished starving students for lacking courage to go hungry; she supposedly took bribes from desperate students and staff; and she used her husband's contacts to obtain food illegally from military depots. Kostrovskaia once discovered bread scraps, a jar with some tinned meat, and fish heads in Tager's garbage (TsGALI 157/1/28/28-30, 33, 43). Particularly insulting was how Tager spared no food for her cat. In a certainly degrading act, Kostrovskaia snuck into Tager's office to eat some of the cat's food. Both Tager and her cat were hated as they grew fat; Kostrovskaia dreamt of eating the cat out of survival and revenge (TsGALI 157/1/28/7-8).

As profane as Tager and cat were, consuming human flesh revealed the naked power of norms and sacred-profane. The prospect of death from starvation was clear in one's physical condition and corpses accumulating everywhere. An individual could coldly calculate that canni-

balism could help avoid death, and in utilitarian instrumental rationality, the source of meat should not matter much. Reflection on the Prisoners' Dilemma might stop such behavior in normal circumstances: normalizing cannibalism might make all worse off in the future. But in the first Blockade winter, the future was uncertain. Klavdiia Dubrovina made this claim when she told Daniil Granin, "Cannibalism!...Well, that's a normal occurrence (as I read somewhere recently): where hunger meets hunger, there will be cannibalism and people will gobble each other up. This is natural" (TsGALI 107/3/347/20). Diary accounts and recollections note flesh disappearing from frozen corpses on the streets: it was easier to take meat from a corpse hidden in the snow and darkness of wintry Leningrad, than to kill someone for consumption.[17] Yet cannibalism became a powerful support for basic norms because it was usually framed not in a cold, neutral manner but as a horrific occurrence. Individuals reflected on cannibalism in dismay and revulsion in diaries and discussions. In the rumor mill, stories appeared of mothers losing children to cannibals (e.g. TsGALI 107/3/423/73; TsGAIPD 4000/10/484/5-7). Another rumor was that meat pies at farmers' markets contained human flesh. Rare accounts suggest parents who ate their own children did so after the child died, and they were entirely consumed with hunger. Yet despite intense hunger and frozen corpses temptingly available, this norm did not disappear, *pace* Sorokin (1975): Bidlack (2000) calculated only 15,000 arrests for cannibalism. Even if many acts were never discovered, the relative infrequency for a large, hungry population suggests many chose to die rather than consume human flesh. Eating pets was a profane but defending a core norm (survival of self and family); consuming human flesh would destroy that core entirely.

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[17] Russian distinguishes between *liudoedstvo* (eating people) and *trupoedstvo* (eating corpses), although the former was used generically. *Liudoedstvo* is more graphic than "cannibalism": it literally means "people-eating." Marsh (1998) notes cannibalism was among the worst profanities in Russian folk tales, suggesting it was embedded in assumptions of civilized behavior.

For some, cannibalism was so horrible they could not write about it, as this could potentially justify it as normal even in so extreme a circumstance and reflection could reveal a dark side of human nature one did not want to see. Nikolai Gorshkov noted rumors of cannibalism but wrote, "It is impossibly difficult to write about this" (Bernev and Chernov 2004: 69). In January 1942 Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva noted she would not write about cannibalism, but in February it was too strong to ignore—even if infrequent, its mere existence was awful enough to threaten the narrative of progressive, civilized Soviet society. She wrote dramatically, "In the city of Leningrad there is, in one word—cannibalism" (RNB 1015/57/171). Cannibalism seemed so abnormal that professor Dmitrii Kargin was skeptical it existed: he claimed bodies at one factory were missing heads or other flesh because German shells, not cannibals, ravaged the bodies. Claims of meat pies with human meat sold at the *rynok* had to be false. Yet his skepticism came from assumptions of cannibalism's irrationality: this was "atavism," as a "normal, cultured person would never have any compelling conditions to decide to touch human meat…it is necessary to consider participants in cannibalism more likely not normal people, but those who are losing their minds or who have gone completely mad" (Kargin 2000: 125-127).

Once people admitted there might be cannibalism and rumors began to circulate (e.g. RNB 1015/57/177, 180, 181), Leningraders feared that cannibals could be anywhere. Accounts of corpses with flesh ripped from thighs and upper arms began to appear in diaries by December 1941 (e.g. TsGAIPD 4000/11/19/13). School administrator Mariia Fedorova noted cannibalism at the school where she worked. In January 1942 staff suspected a 17-year-old boy was stealing meat. A search of his belongings revealed bloody meat in a handkerchief and a child's corpse in a sack (TsGALI 107/3/321/8). Evgeniia Manonian was at court when a mother was tried for eating her daughter. The mother said she sent her daughter away, but a search of the courtyard found her daughter's head; the mother received a four-year sentence (TsGALI, 107/3/374/10). Aleksei Evdokimov claimed a co-worker was arrested for killing and eating coworkers; a worker at another factory killed and ate one of his children and went insane and died (GMMOBL 1p/30/83, 88, 107). Evdokimov did not witness the latter but believed it: the Blockade was so

immoral itself that Leningraders came to believe such rumors. Vera Kostrovskaia was struck with terror at seeing a corpse taken away for its flesh. She felt obliged to note this in her diary:

> Forgive me, Lelinka, but I cannot not write about this, because this is how it was. I was returning home. In the dark, in an alley, there were weak groans and a dark mass on the snow. Then the groans quieted, and two people moved quickly. They were in a rush because it was 35 degrees below zero, and a corpse would quickly freeze, making it difficult to cut up. The peritoneum needs to be cut while warm, and there's no sense to touch bones covered by the skin …At the market by day, besides wallpaper paste, one can buy *studen'* [meat jelly], but everyone knows what it is made from (TsGALI 157/1/28/19).

Here was reflexivity in action: an act so unspeakable that it demanded condemnation—fixing it as objectively profane—as well as a request for forgiveness in relating the act. This signaled resistance to the Blockade's assault on civilized principles. In commenting on cannibalism, she pulled one norm from the realm of taken-for-granted into the realm of the conscious, empowering it against violation. Further, this suggests cleansing, if not of herself, then of Leningrad.

*How* one transgressed into cannibalism is hard to answer because of paucity of data. However, one recent collection contains an excerpt from Military Tribunal materials on suspected cannibals (David 2006: 135-138). In late December 1941, the Military Prosecutor charged a 29-year-old woman with cannibalism. She admitted to killing her daughter and boiling her flesh; the daughter was starving, refused food the mother offered, and "inevitably she would die soon." An NKVD psychiatrist judged her sane; the Tribunal sentenced her to be shot. That month, a 17-year-old male was arrested and made this statement in his interrogation:

> Yes, I admit I am guilty of stealing corpses from cemeteries and using flesh from human corpses in food. I first used a human corpse for food on December 18, 1941, after I got it from the Bogoslovskii cemetery. The morning of the next day I was detained at home and

taken to the police. I ate [human flesh] only once. I heard repeatedly in conversations

with people I met randomly in lines or other places that human flesh was used in food.

The thought of using a corpse from a cemetery for these purposes came to me as I

walked past Bogoslovskoe cemetery seeking horse meat along the road to Piskarevka. As

of late I was not working anywhere, because more than two months ago I was fired for

tardiness from canteen #38 in the Vyborg district, where I worked as a kitchen worker.

The accused claimed this was the first and last case of such "low behavior" and that he would

improve "for society" and "before his own conscience." He framed his act as desperate but driv-

en by a sacred object, life: "Yes, of course I acted lowly, but I was guided by a intolerable thirst

for life, an aspiration to save myself by whatever means possible, and a growing weakness, a

feeling of hunger, and a fear of my own death dulled all other feelings and nothing, it seemed,

was able to stop me." The psychiatrist felt the man was sane. The accused begged for mercy and

that he be allowed to study music and fulfill his talents. The Tribunal ordered he be shot.

This account of becoming a cannibal reveals interesting dynamics to transgressing a

powerful symbolic boundary. We can imagine what led up to the act. This man admitted he was

starving and rationalized his transgression in terms of physical weakness and an insatiable physi-

cal desire for food and survival. His admission of low status and unemployment, along with the

psychiatrist's observation that he had not looked after himself (including not washing), suggests

a possible anomic situation and that this man felt Blockade dehumanization. We also see proxim-

ity and temptation: it is easy to imagine from this testimony that this starving, disheveled man

passed a cemetery on a regular basis while he was looking for food—a temptation that became

too great. Yet we also see a paradoxical, double normalization. On the one hand, the man reflex-

ively normalized cannibalism by invoking rumors: informal discourse that presented cannibalism

as horrific suggested to him that he was not alone or so abnormal after all. He also seemed to hint

that he was stealing flesh from a body *already dead* from wartime violence; the war was to

blame, not he. He also made his cannibalism a fleeting deviation from his normal cultured self:

he had a talent for music, he had committed cannibalism only once, and he was ready to straighten up and return to normal society. In her discussion of cannibalism, part of which I cited earlier, Mariia Fedorova raised a striking example of normalization in the context of the abnormal Blockade. She wrote of one male on trial for cutting the head off of a corpse. When the judge asked why he had done it, the accused answered, "You cannot imagine how ideally tasty fried human brain is. Do you understand? It has the ideal taste" (TsGALI 107/3/321/8).

Instrumental rationality expanded to cover eating cats—an extrapolation of consuming other animals, although proximity and empathy meant this was no easy task even in bad circumstances. Cannibalism did occur; but the progression from cats to cannibalism was not so smooth and linear. Recognizing and condemning cannibalism in diaries or conversations showed some boundaries were inviolable; people condemned cannibalism they only *heard of*, and I cannot even find *rumors* of someone sacrificing his life to be "food" for others. While clearly visible mass death proved starvation was a real threat, eating another was a boundary many Leningraders could not cross, even if it meant one's own demise.

### NORMS, UTILITY, AND SURVIVING WAR: THE BLOCKADE AND BEYOND

The Blockade takes us back to central questions that animated Durkheim's work, namely the issue of norms and order. My goal has not been to deny institutional power or structures, but rather to explore the merit of probing deeper into social dimensions of embeddedness in norms and self. State power did not entirely disappear in Leningrad: through rationing, conscription, propaganda, martial law, and the like, it created new categories of identity and affected norms and material incentives. However, war also affected state power: straining it through increased demands, or focusing state attention even more on security, espionage, and mobilization materiel and manpower. Challenges to survival shifted incentives such that instrumentally rational calculation

could not be relied upon to support law.[18] Yet despite the Blockade nightmare and real violations of laws and norms, core norms did not vanish. This article sought to provide some explanation for why, although it has not exhausted this topic. Whether cooperative or individual logics, instrumental or substantive logics, operated also depended on gender and class, and on specific sites and objects. It may seem banal that norms matter—but the boundary between normative and calculative behavior is ignored or downplayed, as scholars privilege one or the other. This subject must be better understood; challenges to survival will not go away.

As suspected, proximity and core conceptions of "civilized" behavior, especially as resistance to dehumanization, seem crucial founts of normative classifications, codes of conduct, and boundaries. One case cannot provide final conclusions about differential strength of norms, but evidence here suggests this order: Cannibalism → theft from insiders → theft from outsiders (individuals) → eating animals → theft from the state/formal organizations → use of exclusion and unequal privilege. Boundaries are stronger if the potential victim is *physical*. This could include families and even extend to a neighborhood, in contrast to formal organizations that are groups of *positions*. This has affinity with observations that soldiers most likely to sacrifice to defend families and comrades, and that training soldiers to kill is difficult (cf. McPherson 1998; Faust 2008). While eating cats and dogs was an extension of eating livestock, cannibalism was mostly beyond the pale; the physiological drive for survival underlying cannibalism (Petrinovich 2000) does not always triumph. In fact, it might be that normative boundaries vis-à-vis others persist less from respect for rights than from sanctity of a *physical body*, even if that status is of-

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[18] For a case like the United States in both world wars—physically distant from actual fighting and facing less severe deprivation—state power, formal institutions, social structures such as networks and class, and such cultural production as propaganda are less compromised. Conventional analyses are more applicable, although this does not mean there is no change or innovation in categories and practices (cf. Honey 1984 and Grayzel 1999 on war and gender).

ten enough honored in the breach.[19] An instrumentally rational justification for eating human flesh (survival) was outweighed by that act's profanity and the body's sanctity; these norms were mobilized in conversations, recollections, and diary accounts. Another example of sanctity of the body was disposal of Blockade dead without usual rituals, e.g. taking corpses straight to morgues or leaving them on the street. Varvara Vraskaia and her brother went to great effort to make a coffin for their father; when their aunt died soon after, Vraskaia made sure to note that they could not dispose of her body properly because they were too weak and poor (RNB 1273/13/23).

War and Soviet socialism were two important material and symbolic contexts; might they have affected norms and behavior directly and symbolically? Soviet socialism approximated an anti-capitalist moral economy (cf. Kotkin 1995) and could provide language and support for core norms. The war was symbolic as well as material; Leningraders perceived the Blockade as Nazi atrocity versus a peaceful people and saw the German-Soviet conflict as a clash of civilizations (fascism versus socialism). I provide only a cursory discussion, as conscious reflection on the war and Soviet socialism *in and of themselves* varies by social class and involves *habitus*—a complex topic that requires its own analysis (which a colleague and I are conducting). Members of the cultural *intelligentsia* (artists, academics, etc.) were most likely to be pro-Soviet and support norm-governed behavior, and they reflected with the most depth on the war and socialism. This comes out best in attitudes towards profit-oriented behavior at the *rynok*. Academic Dmitrii Kargin held *rynok* sellers in contempt for the Soviet sin of speculation: "It is logical that *speculators*, who have contacts with bread factories, bakeries, canteens, and other allocators, are the privileged 'estate' at the market…They are 'millionaires,' they do not suffer any hunger and a significant number of them in the end will be objects of prosecutorial supervision and of the punishing arm of wartime law" (Kargin 2000: 38). Artist Ivan Vladimirov (2009) was critical of the

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[19] Sanctity of the body underlies some cannibalism. One Amazonian community would eat the dead out of respect, rather than bury bodies in dirty, polluting ground (Conklin 2001).

*rynok* and kept away even though he was starving. Some non-*intelligenty* could invoke Soviet ideals when reflecting on wartime behavior. Worker Olga Epshtein was critical of managers and Party leaders in her factory who ate better than workers and were not sufficiently patriotic (e.g. TsGALI 107/3/323/18, 22; 107/3/324/31, 33, 40, 46). As a rule, non-*intelligentsia* took for granted Blockade and Soviet socialism as a stage on which the morality play unfolded. They did not condemn cannibalism as illegal or anti-Soviet but as uncivilized and outright immoral. Transgressions could haunt Leningraders as humans, not just as Soviets or Leningraders.

Symbolically, the Blockade did have one impact that could aid norms: raising the status of vengeance and hatred. Blockade, socialism, and emerging national consciousness often combined in a "survival as hatred and vengeance" motif that echoed Levi's "power to refuse our consent" to be dehumanized. Nina Rogova recalled how her students wrote an essay on the theme, "Why I Hate the Germans"; thirty years later she still read them (TsGALI 107/3/393/23). Vasilisa Malysheva wrote how she and comrades read newspapers aloud at work, bringing forth tears and anger: "a storm of spite among our people, we cannot forgive [Germans] for the blood, tears, the mockery, theft, violence" (TsGAIPD 4000/11/65/5). As Margarita Niaga wrote, rising bread rations "did not restore our strength. Hatred restored it, the desire to give that strength to others, it was not physical strength but moral strength of the spirit" (TsGALI 520/1/245/13). This is not quite the *resentement* Nietzsche saw beneath slave morality or that Greenfeld (1992) found in Russian and German national identity. Yet it provided a new impetus to survive and to embrace a Soviet (and Leningrad) identity, including norms of behavior. To survive or die in a civilized manner meant victory over the Germans. That this hatred became part of post-war conceptions of international relations and the trauma narrative (Alexander 1994) is something scholars of the USSR know, but *how* this motif became so embedded requires study.[20]

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[20] Diarists also grew agitated at the United States and Britain for not opening a second front in 1942.

Comparisons with other intense moments of wartime suffering might provide useful insights. Regarding Nazi death camps, Levi (1985) focused on how dehumanization—depriving Jews of food or overworking them, enforcing pointless rules—bred instrumental survival at all costs: "to he that has, will be given; from he that has not, will be taken away" (88). Yet:

> We do not believe in the most obvious and facile deduction: that man is fundamentally brutal, egoistic and stupid in his conduct once every civilized institution is taken away, and that [the camp inmate] is consequently nothing but a man without inhibitions. We believe, rather, that the only conclusion to be drawn is that in the face of driving necessity and physical disabilities many social habits and instincts are reduced to silence (87).

Between this and the "Law of the Lager," Levi suggests instrumental rationality is conditioned through enforced atomization, severe competition for survival, and dehumanization. Yarov's (2008) "degradation thesis" echoes this: Leningraders succumbed to unthinking egoism that Irina Zelenskaia called the "dictatorship of the stomach" (TsGAIPD 4000/11/35/22). Yet normative behavior could survive Nazi and Soviet camps, as Todorov (1996: 34-39, 71-90, 286-292) noted in Levi's own text (see also Monroe 2004 on how identity compelled some Germans to rescue Jews for moral reasons). As German guards tried to break their humanity, Jews continued seemingly such futile rituals as washing in the latrine or being compassionate as resistance. Kaplan's (1973) diary of the Warsaw ghetto has a similar motif: smuggling was not simply for survival or gain, but also an expression of resistance. In a case of socially constructed *antipathy*, Goldhagen's (1996) data reveal that German police battalions tortured Jews by the end of the war even though formal authority to compel torture was gone.

Maček's (2009) anthropological analysis of survival in besieged Sarajevo notes attempts to maintain practices, norms, and order of the stable prewar period. While this siege was not as intense or destructive as the Blockade, it was violent enough that similar tendencies of survival practices and making meaning emerge. As in Leningrad, supply of food and fuel was precarious;

while Sarajevo was not bombed or shelled as was Leningrad, snipers were ever-present. Sarajevans tried to maintain a semblance of normality and civilized behavior through humor (a form of reflexivity), maintaining "European" standards of dress, and keeping apartments clean (Maček 2009: chapter 2). Sarajevans were troubled by breakdowns of norms of reciprocity—although Maček does not provide detail on transgressions and innovations, except for such tactics as devising meals corresponding to type and amount of available food, obtaining water from street pipes, or devising small stoves (the "Sarajevo tin can"). Survival in her account involves transgressions from normal to abnormal, and Maček does recount incidents of opportunism (79-82; also Andreas 2008): e.g. individuals lying about their situation so that generous friends would give them their last bottles of oil, or neighbors siphoning electricity from cables providing "priority electricity" to hospitals. And her account also reveals mutual aid and friendships growing from wartime suffering (cf. Dizdarević 1993).

Given deprivation and violence were more intense in Leningrad than in Sarajevo, we expect transgressions to be greater qualitatively and quantitatively. Without comparable data for comparison, I limit my remarks, but it seems Sarajevans were conscious of normative innovations and transgressions, and reflection strengthened determination to maintain "civilized" behavior. A worse situation in the Blockade meant greater "survival deviations" or innovations, yet even here there were limits. The strength of norms might decrease linearly in the aggregate with deprivation and suffering, but the Blockade, Holocaust, and Sarajevo suggest there is more to the story. While normative violations increasingly occur as desperation worsens, changes in behavior are *punctuated and mediated* by normative processes; norms do not fall to starvation or dep-

rivation quite as mechanically as Sorokin (1975: 135-145, chapter 9) suggests. That criminality increases with radical deprivation is unsurprising, but it does so in a complex manner.[21]

Despite incentives otherwise and reduced sanctions in the Blockade's near-Hobbesian state of nature, norms survived. Fewer resources for survival raised instrumental rationality; yet the shift from normative to instrumental was not smooth. Changing incentives will not lead to automatic changes in behavior; as consumption of cats versus people showed, such changes vary according to power and content of norms, as well as contexts. That people kept diaries and coded their narratives in terms of norms and transgressions, or recalled these clearly thirty years later to share with an outsider (Granin), is proof of the power of norms; were they window-dressing for rational action, why raise or remember them? Given resources invested in building capitalism and democracy in the former USSR, Latin America, and the Middle East (especially by military might), interests versus norms during conflict will not vanish. Modern governmentality requires a combination of norms that combine control, instrumentally rational interests, and beliefs in individual autonomy and responsibility. Study of the Blockade of Leningrad and similar contexts can reveal much about practices, incentives, and meanings—especially how humans can still be "moral, believing animals" (Smith 2003) in the most horrific circumstances.

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[21] Sorokin's data are observations scattered across space and time, usually from a distance (except his own in Petrograd, although the text does not suggest close scrutiny). An in-depth examination might have revealed normative nuances I raise here.

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**NB**: Archival data are systematized as fond (collection), opis (register), delo (file), list (page). I use {ARCHIVE fond/opis/delo/list}, with fond absent in GMMOBL and opis absent in RNB.

- *GMMOBL* : State Memorial Museum of the Blockade of Leningrad, St. Petersburg.
- *RNB*: Russian National Library (Written Records Collection), St. Petersburg.
- *TsGA*: Central State Archive, St. Petersburg.
- *TsGAIPD*: Central State Archive of Historical-Political Documents, St. Petersburg.
- *TSGALI*: Central State Archive of Literature and Art, St. Petersburg.

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