

## **WORLD WAR II ON THE EASTERN FRONT**

The Second World War was the most devastating battle in the history of humanity. Fought on several fronts – western and eastern Europe, as well as Africa, the Middle East, and Asia – the human toll after five years of battle was devastating.

Many European nations were invaded and occupied by the German Nazi forces in the early days and months of the war. On the Eastern Front, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, surrounding the city of Leningrad, and advancing on Moscow and Stalingrad. But the Russians fought bitterly for three years, undergoing severe deprivation, even starvation of the civilian population, without succumbing to occupation. The fierce resistance of the Russian military and civilian population was a major factor in the Allies' ultimate victory in Europe, as the Germans suffered critical losses and depletion of resources on the Eastern Front.

While the Allies pushed towards Germany on the Western Front following the D-Day Invasion of June, 1944, the Russians also advanced until finally in the spring of 1945, they joined with US troops on the Elbe River just outside Berlin. Soviet troops entered Berlin on 8 May, 1945 and a total surrender was declared on 9 May.

By the end of World War II, more than 26 million Soviet citizens lost their lives; some 700,000 people perished during the 900-day siege of Leningrad; five million perished in captivity.