

The Queen's message to the Arctic Convoys veterans / HMS Belfast / London

Submitted by: Russia House Associates Ltd

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9 May 2012 became a very special and memorable one for British and Russian Second World War veterans, Londoners and visitors to the capital.

Tchaikovsky's masterpiece, the 1812 Overture, was performed by the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra and accompanied by live cannons salute from HMS Belfast during the open to the Public at no cost concert in Hay's Galleria, near London Bridge.

Earlier that day the Tower Bridge was raised in honour of the Arctic Convoys as William-B boat passed under the bridge with the veterans onboard preceeding a privately held ceremony that took place on HMS Belfast, where British veterans of Arctic convoys, joined by their friends veterans from Russia, paid tribute to their shipmates with traditional toasts 'Up Spirits!' with Pusser's Rum and 'To Victory!' with Russian Standard Vodka. The ceremony was attended by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, the Russian Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko, Lord Alan West, Rear Admiral John Gower OBE Assistant Chief of Defence Staff, HM Lord-Lieutenant Sir David Brewer and the event's organiser Eugene Kasevin.

HRH The Duke of Gloucester read out The Queen's personal message from, which said:

"As you gather on the seventy-first anniversary of the first Arctic Convoy [Dervish], we again remember and acknowledge the courage shown and the sacrifices made by British and Russian servicemen in the name of freedom.

In this year of my Diamond Jubilee, I am pleased to send my warm good wishes to those veterans who have travelled from Moscow, and their British comrades, in commemorating this historic occasion on HMS BELFAST today.

ELIZABETH R
9th May, 2012"

The events organiser Eugene Kasevin thanked the staff of HMS Belfast, who have been most generous with the hospitality and helpful in spite of ongoing restoration of the gun-way and HMS Belfast being closed to the public until 18th of May.

The Arctic Convoys to Russia (1941-1945) were regarded by many as 'suicide missions' and described by Winston Churchill as 'the worst journey in the world'. They voyaged through the dangerous, icy seas of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, braving fog, twenty foot waves, pack ice and bitterly cold temperatures, from Britain and Iceland to the northern ports of Arkhangelsk and Murmansk in the Soviet Union. Over four years, the convoys delivered four million tons of vital supplies to the Soviet Union, urgently needed for its battle against Hitler's fascism.

The Victory Day London (<http://www.victorydaylondon.co.uk>) project started in 2007 and is dedicated to the brave sailors of the Arctic Convoys, their solidarity and the joint efforts of the Royal Navy, the

British Merchant Navy and Russian Navy servicemen, whose actions were critical to victory.

The organiser thanks the British and Russian businesses, namely: Petropavlovsk Plc (<http://www.petropavlovsk.net>), BP Plc (<http://www.bp.com>), VTB Capital (<http://www.vtbcapital.com>), SCF Sovcomflot (<http://www.scf-group.ru>), Marsh Ltd (<http://www.marsh.co.uk>), Forex Capital Markets Ltd. (<http://www.fxcmpro.com>), whose support made the event possible.

Photo Gallery: http://www.victorydaylondon.co.uk/?page_id=378

Video Feeds:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSwRqMuGOiw> (The Queen's message)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYdnoKMrwko> (1812 Overture)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/multimedia/2012/05/120509_belfast_victory_day.shtml (BBC Russian Service)

Event: <http://www.VictoryDayLondon.co.uk>

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