



UK Arctic Star medal.
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To Russia,

AS OUR DISCERNING readership may no doubt have noticed, here at *iScot Magazine*, we're not generally big on any jingoistic tub-thumping that harks back to some mythical bygone age of British military superiority. Come to think of it, we're no gey big on muckle that's *British...* the clue's in oor title after all – *iScot, for those o independent mind!* Aye, we definitely lean more towards the Basil Fawlty attitude of “don't mention the war” unless, of course, we have good reason. For example, just last year (May/June 2019, Issue 53, *He never talked about it...*) we highlighted the forgotten, or rather deliberately suppressed, story of the 51st (Highland) Division at St Valéry

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in 1940, when Churchill sacrificed thousands of mainly Scottish troops just so he could say there had been no retreat or defeat. Today we bring you the story of another much-ignored chapter from Scotland's contribution to the WWII effort, many miles removed from France and Belgium, where everyone naturally assumes the major events of the war took place. At a time in our history where we are increasingly looking northwards to our Icelandic, Baltic and Nordic neighbours, it seems fitting to recognise the wartime heroics of the Russian Arctic Convoys...

In 1939, the Soviet Union and Germany had signed a non-aggression agreement, *The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact*, which basically divvied up control of the countries of Central Europe between them. As Hitler became more and more expansionist, by mid-1940 he was already planning to invade the Soviet Union and by the end of that year he had deployed *Operation Barbarossa*, utilising around 3 million troops to invade along an 1800-mile front. This *Eastern Front* would become notorious for