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An Army of Events To Take Place on Victory Day

By The Moscow Times

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Moscow taking to the streets in celebration of Victory Day 2012, waiting for the legendary Red Square parade. **Alex Beltyukov**

With Easter and May Day festivities barely over, the city is already launching into its 68th 'Victory Day' celebrations on May 9. The date marks the formal end to World War II, when Germany conceded defeat to the western allies and the Soviet Union.

The usual enormous display of military might will be accompanied by a series of events across both Moscow and 24 other cities Russia-wide, as onlookers wave red carnations and flags from hands bearing the striped black and orange Ribbon of St. George.

Over 11,000 people will be participating in the 2013 Red Square parade, 10,000 of which will be officers and servicemen, according to Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Vladimir Chirkin.

Army vehicles involved will include armored personnel carriers and a crew of 8 Mi-8 helicopter, alongside the usual tanks, immaculately-unformed soldiers, and surface-to-air missile systems.

The city is attempting to ensure excellent weather for the occasion, using military planes to chemically disperse clouds capable of ruining the cheer, at a cost of over $1.2 million.

“The parade symbolizes the continuity in the military, and is a major component of patriotic education,” head of the Defense Ministry, Sergei Shoigu, told Interfax in April.

However, some less artillery-intensive events will also be happening across the capital as part of Victory Day: Numerous parks will play host to festivities, while acts of respect for veterans and the war dead will take place simultaneously.

The annual laying of flowers and wreaths at both the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and monument to Georgy Zhukov, will be accompanied by a new procession entitled “Moscow Remembers.”

The event begins at midday on Tverskoi Bulvar. Relatives of those who participated in World War II battles will carry photographs and memorabilia pertaining to their predecessors, set to the sound of an orchestra. The motivating idea behind the event is that the history of a country consists of the people comprising it.

A historic, and often moving, annual meeting of veterans at the Bolshoi Theater is to take place from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m..

At 2 p.m. on Poklonnaya Hill, Muscovites will be crowding into Park Pobedy (Victory Park) to see a symphony concert led by conductor and Mariinsky director Valery Gergiyev and award winning classical pianist Denis Matsuyev. This will be followed by a horse show at 5 p.m., alongside a performance from the Presidential Orchestra of Russia.

From 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. a costumed reconstruction of life at the front will take place on Kamergersky Pereulok. Students will depict scenes of soldiers resting, writing letters, or preparing to fight. An ‘apple orchard’ installation will be on display, with the trees made out of remnants of war paraphernalia found around Moscow.

A series of mini-plays about the war, as seen by younger generations, will take place at shopping mall TsUM. Later, at 4 p.m., there will be a screening of the film “Stop! Look! Remember!” on Tverskaya Ploshchad. The documentary uses old archive footage from World War II.

Fili Park will itself turn into an impromptu movie set from midday onwards, where guests and attendees become actors and extras in a film about the war. Live accordion music and readings are expected, alongside the showing of old wartime news reels.

At 6 p.m. in the Hermitage Garden, a “Victory Ball” will take place to the tunes of a brass band, with both 1940s clothes-clad professional dancers and the wider public joining in. Visitors will have the chance to learn the waltz, tango, and the Polish Krakowiak.

Baumansky, Kuzminki and Sokolniki parks will all host outdoor Victory Day extravaganzas,

while Gorky Park will bear witness to a further meeting of veterans during the daytime. In the evening, a free screening of the biopic 'Gagarin: First in space' will be shown.

The culmination of Victory Day festivities will be at 10 p.m. with an impressive fireworks display, lighting up most of central Moscow's skies, fired from numerous locations around Tverskaya Square, Sparrow Hills and Victory Park.

For those wanting to avoid the crowds, or those interested in a more intricate historical gaze on World War II, museums will be a safe refuge.

Moscow's Multimedia Art Museum (16 Ostozhenka) is presenting a collection of photographs entitled 'Stalingrad.' The war-torn landscapes and un-glamorous soldier portraits reveal the darker side of battle through the key city in the Soviet Union's fight against Nazi Germany.

Another collection of monochrome photographs entitled 'Veterans of the Great Patriotic War,' will be on display at the Brothers Lumiere Center of Photography (1/3 Naberezhnaya Bolotnaya). The former soldiers were photographed across the early 2000s in Gorky Park by contemporary British Photographer, James Hill.

Letters and memories of Red Army Jews will be displayed at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (11 Obraztsova) in an exhibit entitled "Fates during the Great Patriotic War." Some 500,000 Soviet Jews served in the Red Army during World War II.

From 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. music and songs of the era can be heard in the Museum of Mikhail Bulgakov (10 Bolshaya Sadovaya). The beautiful yet sad 1957 classic, 'The Cranes are Flying,' will be screened for free at Pioner (21 Kutuzovsky Prospekt) at 3:30 p.m..

However, festival preparations haven't all been rosy. Many have voiced upset over blocked roads, citing a potentially detrimental effect on emergency health care. Some controversial measures have also been taken, most notably the ceremonial unveiling of a bust of Josef Stalin in Yakutsk on May 8.

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