



Bookshelf

2006

[Introduction to] Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda

David Brandenberger
University of Richmond, dbranden@richmond.edu

Kevin M. F. Platt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/bookshelf>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), [Slavic Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Platt, Kevin M. F., and David Brandenberger, eds. *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

NOTE: This PDF preview of [Introduction to] Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda includes only the preface and/or introduction. To purchase the full text, please click [here](#).

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bookshelf by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

~ *Epic Revisionism*

Russian History and Literature as
Stalinist Propaganda

Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger, editors

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS

Introduction

Tsarist-Era Heroes in Stalinist Mass Culture and Propaganda

∞ DAVID BRANDENBERGER AND KEVIN M. F. PLATT

In late 1931, the popular German biographer Emil Ludwig conducted an interview with Joseph Stalin that drew attention to a rather unorthodox dimension of the party's Marxist-Leninist ideology. Aware of the general secretary's respect for a broad array of "historic individuals" from V. I. Lenin to Peter the Great, Ludwig asked how such beliefs could be reconciled with the tenets of historical materialism. Their subsequent conversation prefigured a gradual evolution of Bolshevik views on the past that would return the "great men of history" to center stage by the end of the 1930s:

LUDWIG: Marxism denies the leading role of personality in history. Don't you see a contradiction between a materialist understanding of history and the fact that you nevertheless recognize a leading role for historic personalities?

STALIN: No, there is no contradiction. . . . Every generation is met with certain conditions that already exist in their present form as that generation comes into the world. Great people are worth something only insofar as they are able to understand correctly these conditions and what is necessary to alter them. . . .

LUDWIG: Some thirty years ago when I was studying at university, a large number of German professors who considered themselves to be adherents of the materialist understanding of history assured us that Marxism denies the role of heroes and the role of heroic personalities in history.

STALIN: They were vulgarizers of Marxism. Marxism has never denied the role of heroes. To the contrary, it gives them a significant role, albeit in line with the conditions that I have just described.

In perhaps their most famous exchange, Ludwig asked Stalin if he recognized a parallel between himself and Peter the Great. Did he consider himself a latter-day Peter or a continuer of his work? "Not by any means," Stalin replied, dismissing all historical parallels as "risky" and a waste of time. Of course, it was true that Peter had "done a great deal" within the context of the eighteenth century and deserved recognition for his accomplishments. Yet Stalin scoffed at the idea that the tsar might serve as a role model for the twentieth century. Instead, he declared, "I am a pupil of Lenin," adding for good measure that "Peter the Great . . . is a drop in the ocean, whereas Lenin is the ocean itself."¹

Stalin's refusal to consider himself a continuer of Peter's work is neither surprising nor remarkable. After all, it is entirely possible to have respect for the past without anachronistically identifying with distant ancestors or outmoded precedents. But Stalin's characteristic self-assurance notwithstanding, in the years leading up to the Ludwig interview, Soviet ideologists, historians, and other public figures wrestled over the role of the individual in historical events. On one hand, Marxism's focus on materialism, anonymous social forces, and class struggle had given rise to an understanding of history as a mass phenomenon, a vision captured in S. M. Eisenstein's "heroless" films *Strike* and *October* and M. N. Pokrovskii's "sociological" school of historiography. On the other hand, the mythologization of the October 1917 Revolution had led to a rash of accounts foregrounding heroic individuals, ranging from D. M. Furmanov's celebrated novel *Chapaev* (1923) to the myriad of works associated with Lenin's developing cult of personality.² "Revolutionaries" from the tsarist past, from the Decembrists to Stepan Razin, Emil'ian Pugachev, and the Imam Shamil', were similarly mythologized. Ludwig's line of questioning in 1931 focused precisely on this conceptual disagreement over the proper role of the hero in history.

Yet Stalin's pat answers to Ludwig's questions suggest that a resolution to this tension was already beginning to take shape in Soviet public life by the early 1930s. Within a few years' time, heroes and heroism would come to stand at the center of a series of Soviet propaganda drives that were designed to promote a newly populist vision of the USSR's "usable past."³ Between 1929 and 1935, a heroic pantheon was constructed from the ranks of the society's most famous Old Bolsheviks, Red Army commanders, industrial shock workers, and champion agricultural laborers. Even Arctic explorers found representation on the Soviet Olympus.⁴ These celebrities, in turn, were joined during the second half of the decade by an array of mainstream historic figures from the pre-revolutionary period—famous

individuals like Aleksandr Nevskii, Minin and Pozharskii, Ivan Susanin, Suvorov, Kutuzov, Lomonosov, Pushkin, and so on.

If Stalin had been vague in 1931 when Ludwig asked him about Peter the Great's historical significance, it is revealing to note that just six years later, on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, a major motion picture about Russia's first emperor dominated Soviet movie house screens. Peter and other themes drawn from the Russian national past also loomed large in a new generation of public school history textbooks released during the fall of that year.⁵ As the contents of this volume indicate, such themes became ubiquitous in Soviet mass culture during the late 1930s, throughout popular literature, the press, film, opera, and theater.

This growing prominence of names and reputations from the Russian national past at times threatened to eclipse the celebration of more recent Soviet heroes, sparking protest from veteran leftists. The literary critic V. I. Blium expressed particular disdain for productions like Eisenstein's film *Aleksandr Nevskii*, A. E. Korneichuk's play *Bogdan Khmel'nitskii*, and the revival of M. I. Glinka's opera *Ivan Susanin*, even complaining in a letter to Stalin that "Soviet patriotism nowadays is sometimes coming to resemble racist nationalism." Although hyperbolic, Blium's analysis was also quite perceptive. Propaganda based on Russian princes, tsars, and generals seemed iconoclastic and perhaps even counter-revolutionary in a society fashioned according to a revolutionary and proletarian internationalist aesthetic. Blium's protests effectively ended his career (see chapter 21), yet the question that the critic posed remains valid to the present day: how did heroes from the Russian national past come to figure so prominently in Stalinist public culture?

The authors of this volume propose to resolve this question by examining the circumstances under which heroes drawn from the annals of medieval Rus', Muscovy, and imperial Russia were mobilized to serve the Soviet state during the 1930s and 1940s. Many have dismissed the rehabilitation of figures such as Peter the Great, Aleksandr Nevskii, and Ivan the Terrible during this time as either a component of Stalin's burgeoning personality cult or one of the more marginal, prosaic aspects of the party's ideological "Great Retreat."⁶ Others ignore the phenomenon entirely, apparently considering it to have been an aberration within an otherwise orthodox socialist political culture.⁷ We, however, believe that the Soviet rehabilitation of the tsarist past deserves a more serious investigation. As the present collection demonstrates, the Stalinist revival of great names from Russian history was a defining feature of Soviet public life during the 1930s. Not

only do these rehabilitations reflect a growing sense of populism, russocentrism, and etatism over the course of the decade, but they also anticipate the direction taken by the most effective genres of wartime propaganda between 1941 and 1945.⁸ Consideration of the era's "epic revisionism" reveals a significant and hitherto understudied aspect of Soviet ideology during the Stalin era.

Responding to a growing body of recent literature concerning the idiosyncratic nature of the USSR's interwar "search for a usable past,"⁹ the case studies assembled here approach the rehabilitation of the Russian past from a variety of angles. Several contributions examine figures whose rehabilitations exemplify the Soviet enthusiasm for elaborate "jubilee" celebrations. Thus William Nickell investigates one of the first Soviet experiments with this genre of public life, the Tolstoi centenary of 1928, providing insight into the formation of a pattern of official culture that would become dominant during the following decade. In her contribution, Stephanie Sandler examines the traumatic subconscious of Soviet public discourse surrounding what was perhaps the most prominent cultural event of the 1930s, the Pushkin commemoration of 1937. David Powelstock complements both of these chapters with analysis of the debates surrounding the Soviet canonization of the notoriously "difficult" poet Mikhail Lermontov in connection with his 1939 and 1941 jubilee years.

Other chapters of the volume examine the rehabilitation campaigns themselves. David Brandenberger and Kevin M. F. Platt offer a comprehensive account of the Soviet reinvention of Ivan the Terrible, which details the tension between official intent and historical contingency that ultimately led the entire endeavor into stalemate. In a separate contribution, Platt investigates the political and textual strategies employed by Aleksei Tolstoi in his contributions to the rehabilitation of Peter the Great, revealing that the novelist possessed a remarkable degree of political savvy during the turmoil of the interwar period. Brandenberger surveys public and private reactions to a similarly pioneering work, S. M. Eisenstein's epic film *Aleksandr Nevskii*, offering insight into the broader popular reception of Soviet historical propaganda as a whole.

Still other chapters provide counterpoint to the revival of Russian historical and cultural figures by examining the backlash, scandal, and "reverse rehabilitation" that accompanied the official campaigns. A. M. Dubrovsky chronicles the downfall of Dem'ian Bednyi, a radical poet who struggled unsuccessfully to adjust to the new Soviet attitude toward Russian history. Maureen Perrie details a similar case involving Mikhail Bulgakov, observing

how the playwright's comedic treatment of Ivan the Terrible during the mid-1930s failed to anticipate Soviet officialdom's evolving views concerning this controversial figure. Andrew Wachtel provides a fascinating account of the devastating effect that an earlier revival of Nikolai Leskov's "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District" had on Dmitrii Shostakovich's operatic version of the story—one that nearly cost the composer his career. Finally, Susan Beam Eggers investigates the reverse rehabilitation (i.e., vilification) of the Polish invaders of the seventeenth century "Time of Troubles" in her treatment of the Soviet revival of M. I. Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar*. According to Eggers, this opera's indictment of the Poles took on epic proportions in the late 1930s in order to provide Soviet society with a convenient allegory for the rising threat of German fascism. Adding to the depth of the collection, each of these case studies is complemented by the translation of a primary source—either a contemporary newspaper article, short story or unpublished archival document—in order to enrich the discussion at hand. This combination of primary and secondary sources provides students of the period with an unusually subtle and nuanced understanding of the context and "texture" of Stalinist historical propaganda.

Unlike many loosely assembled collections of conference proceedings, *Epic Revisionism* is a focused, multi-author investigation of the role played by Russian history and literature in Stalinist public discourse. The diversity of the volume's contributors—representing three countries, two academic disciplines and a range of professional advancement—has resulted in a remarkably varied set of approaches and conclusions regarding the subject at hand. While some chapters reflect a largely "top-down" conception of the Stalinist state's management of public life (Dubrovsky, Eggers), others focus on the extent to which the revival of figures from the Russian past was driven by the political strivings and creative energies of individual artists (Platt) or other, more historically contingent factors (Nickell, Perrie, Brandenberger and Platt). Another set of productive tensions among the volume's chapters may be drawn between those authors who focus on conflicts between official discourse and atypical or dissenting voices (Sandler, Wachtel, Dubrovsky), and those who investigate internal divisions within the official discourse itself (Nickell, Platt, Brandenberger, Platt and Brandenberger, Powelstock). Finally, a variety of disciplinary affiliations provides the volume with a wide array of methodological approaches, ranging from a cultural-historical analysis of individual texts (Sandler, Platt) to broader surveys of journalism (Powelstock) and mass media as a whole (Nickell). Biographically based analysis also plays a role in the volume

(Dubrovsky, Perrie), as does work that focuses tightly on individual components of the overall campaign (Wachtel, Brandenberger, Eggers).

In aggregate, these studies capitalize on the multi-author format to generate a coherent, yet internally diverse account of the intent, design and impact of the Stalinist rehabilitation of the Russian national past. As James von Geldern observes in his conclusion to the volume, this coordinated effort also allows us to comment more broadly on the elusive nature of “public culture” in the USSR during the most repressive years of the Soviet era. But beyond the collection’s relevance to the study of the Stalinist period, it would seem to have considerable contemporary application as well. Russian political life today is turning increasingly to the myths, imagery and iconography of the tsarist past in a search for authority and legitimacy. Many of the watchwords and catch phrases of present-day myth-making were last deployed as politically significant symbols under Stalin. Today’s enthusiasts of the pre-revolutionary past no doubt imagine themselves to be reaching back to the roots of the Russian political tradition—to a “true” wellspring of Russian national pride that predates the Soviet era. Yet in reality, this dialogue with the past—ostensibly conducted “over the heads” of seven decades of Soviet history—borrows heavily from the cultural norms of the Stalin period. In many cases, works being reissued today as part of the current “rediscovery” of the Russian past were last printed between the 1930s and the 1950s.¹⁰ Clearly, the Stalinist celebration of the Russian national past must be seen as an important link in the genealogy of current nationalist rhetoric. In this sense, the chapters that follow make a valuable contribution to our understanding of contemporary political culture in Russia as well.



Before turning to the case studies themselves, a brief overview of general trends in interwar Soviet mass culture is necessary in order to set the stage for the detailed accounts that follow. Of central importance to our discussion is the rise of Socialist Realism during the early 1930s. According to Katerina Clark’s now widely accepted view, official endorsement of this mode of literary, artistic, and cultural expression between 1932 and 1934 led to the abandonment of the previous decade’s avant-garde and revolutionary cultural movements. In contrast to the experimentalist writing associated with the many literary groups of the 1920s (the Left Front in Art, or LEF; *Novyi Ief*, VAPP, Kuznetsy, etc.), Socialist Realism was characterized by a simple, traditional style of description derived from the realist prose of the nineteenth century. Thematically, this new mode of expression promoted

everyday tales of valor in which heroic individuals struggled for the greater societal good. Engineered for mass appeal, many of this new mode's plot elements and narrative devices had much in common with epic and folkloric traditions.¹¹

Elaborating on Clark's analysis, Evgenii Dobrenko has argued more recently that Socialist Realism emerged as a populist corrective to the often arcane and inaccessible literature of the 1920s. Aware that the cultural innovations of the first fifteen years of Soviet rule had failed to win the hearts and minds of the poorly educated mass audience, writers and Soviet authorities alike moved to embrace more conventional forms of literary expression toward the end of the first Five-Year Plan.¹² Within only a few years, the new canon of Socialist Realism had eclipsed the challenging, often intentionally obscure writing of the 1920s with an elaborate pageantry of memorable protagonists and dramatic (if also formulaic) story lines, celebrating heroes from the civil war and the on-going socialist construction.

This explanatory model can be generalized in many ways to describe Soviet mass culture as a whole during the early to mid-1930s. Complementing trends in official literature, attempts were made in the early 1930s to enhance the mobilizational potential of Soviet propaganda on the mass level by means of a populist emphasis on contemporary heroism. This approach had been championed already during the late 1920s by A. M. Gor'kii and others who contended that contemporary heroes could be used to inspire and rally "by example." At the same time that mass journalism was shifting its focus to accessible, popular themes, prominent multivolume series like Gor'kii's *History of Plants and Factories* and *The History of the Civil War in the USSR* were launched as a way of developing a new pantheon of Soviet heroes, socialist myths, and modern-day fables. Focusing on shock workers in industry and agriculture, this "search for a usable past" also lavished attention on prominent Old Bolshevik revolutionaries, industrial planners, party leaders, Komsomol officials, Comintern activists, Red Army heroes, non-Russians from the republican party organizations, and even famous members of the secret police. These populist, heroic tales were to provide a common narrative—a story of identity—that the entire society could relate to. Reflecting a new emphasis on patriotism and russocentrism in the press after the mid-1930s, these heroes were to be a rallying call with greater mass appeal than the preceding decade's narrow and impersonal materialist focus on social forces and class struggle.¹³

Interest in individual heroes, patriotism, and the "usable past"—referred to at the time as "pragmatic history"—led some propagandists in

the direction of folkloric themes and imagery.¹⁴ Others concluded that additional members of the newly forming Soviet pantheon of heroes might be drawn from the annals of the pre-revolutionary history of the USSR. Although rehabilitating representatives of the old regime was a politically difficult undertaking, during the second half of the 1930s classic cultural icons like A. S. Pushkin were revived in tandem with a few selectively chosen state-builders like Peter the Great. Such figures were expected to bolster the regime's legitimacy, with Pushkin lending credibility to Soviet literature while Peter's radical reforms would serve as a precedent for Stalin's break-neck industrialization. Among those historical reputations rehabilitated during the second half of the 1930s were famous names such as Nevskii, Donskoi, Minin, Pozharskii, Susanin, Lomonosov, Suvorov, Kutuzov, and Lermontov. Concurrently, one observes a noticeable decline in official enthusiasm for peasant rebels like Razin, Pugachev, and Shamil'.¹⁵ A reflection of the emergent etatist and russocentric tendencies of the day, these moves were purely instrumental, the party hierarchy apparently believing that the Soviet Olympus could be hybridized to allow its Peters and Pushkins to stand shoulder to shoulder alongside contemporary shock workers (e.g., A. Stakhanov), Old Bolsheviks (A. S. Enukidze), prominent industrialists (Iu. L. Piatakov), Komsomol activists (A. V. Kosarev), Red Army commanders (A. I. Egorov), republican party leaders (F. Khodzhaev), and members of the secret police (N. I. Ezhov). By 1936, these heroes stood at the center of countless productions designed for the stage, screen, and public library reading room. Stalinist propagandists' peculiar willingness to line up the heroes of the present with those of the distant past certainly constitutes one of the most surprising developments in the history of Soviet public life. Indeed, the contributions to this volume suggest that many of the most distinctive features of the Soviet rehabilitation of the Russian national past stem from the difficulty of reconciling the contradictions inherent to these campaigns. At base, this tension indicates that, while the Soviet establishment clearly attempted to harness "tried and true" historical myths for its own purposes, this investment in tsarist historical propaganda should not be mistaken for a simple repetition of imperial mythmaking.¹⁶

Although the deployment of tsarist heroes was initially quite modest and selective (focusing largely on both Russian and non-Russian artists and scientists), these pre-revolutionary names and reputations were augmented by so many Russian military and political figures after 1937 that they came to dominate the new Soviet pantheon by the end of the decade. This peculiar turn of events was likely the result of both official direction and historical contingency. Beginning in the fall of 1936, the Great Terror devastated

the party, state bureaucracy, the military high command, and the national republics, crippling the new heroic Olympus as the rolling waves of the purge swept away the leading lights of Soviet society. Agitational efforts at the grassroots level likely appeared close to collapse as the Enukidzes, Piatakovs, Kosarevs, Egorovs, and Ezhovs were consumed in the bloodletting. One may imagine how propagandists on the local level must have panicked over materials that turned out to be littered with the names of recently exposed “enemies of the people.” At times, it must have seemed as if only Socialist Realism’s *fictional* heroes—Pavel Korchagin, Gleb Chumalov, and others—did not risk arrest.¹⁷

As this cruel winnowing process stripped the Soviet Olympus of its party activists and Red Army commanders, the prominence of the pantheon’s constituents from the Russian national past rose dramatically.¹⁸ Not only were the Peters and Pushkins arguably more familiar to average Soviet citizens than the Frunzes, Shchors, and other Bolshevik heroes who were colorless enough to survive the purges, but they were far easier to propagandize (in part because there was little risk that they might be exposed one day as fascist spies or Trotskyites).¹⁹ In other words, the party’s pragmatic willingness to hybridize its pantheon of heroes, compounded by the purges’ destruction of many of the available Soviet heroes, led to an increasing reliance on pre-revolutionary Russian reputations in Soviet propaganda during the mid- to late 1930s.

To many, this substitution may have seemed quite unremarkable in light of the growing conservatism of Stalinist culture. As party propaganda became increasingly russocentric and populist toward the end of the 1930s, it seemed quite natural for the USSR to lay a claim to the political and cultural heritage of tsarist Russia. That said, one fundamental problem could not be denied—these newly discovered “Soviet” heroes were, in the final analysis, a group of nobles, tsarist generals, emperors, and princes, whose status as exemplary figures within the Soviet pantheon of heroes could never be fully reconciled with the reigning revolutionary ethic of Marxism-Leninism. The following case studies examine the inevitable tensions that resulted, detailing some of the most curious dimensions of the Stalinist regime’s “epic revisionism.”

Notes

1. “Beseda s nemetskim pisatelem Emilem Liudvigom,” *Bol'shevik* 8 (1932): 33. Stalin’s view is reminiscent of Hegel’s—see G. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 30.

2. Stalin set the general tone with his treatment of Lenin in 1924: "When I've compared him with the other leaders of our party, it's always seemed to me that Lenin stood head and shoulders above his comrades-in-arms—Plekhanov, Martov, Aksel'rod and others—and that in comparison with them, Lenin was not simply one of the leaders, but a leader of the highest sort, a mountain eagle, who did not know fear in battle and who bravely led the party ahead along the unknown paths of the Russian revolutionary movement." I. V. Stalin, *O Lenine i o leninizme* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), 8. Generally, see Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

3. On the revival of individual actors in Soviet ideology, see Leo Yaresh, "The Role of the Individual in History," in *Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretations of Russia's Past*, ed. C. E. Black (New York: Praeger, 1956), 78–106. The "usable past" expression was coined in 1918 by Van Wyk Brooks and made something of a commonplace by Henry Steele Commager. See Van Wyk Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *Dial* 64 (1918): 337–41; Henry Steele Commager, *The Search for a Usable Past and Other Essays in Historiography* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 3–27.

4. See John McCannon's account of the campaign surrounding the far north: *Red Arctic: Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

5. See Iu. Olesha, "Petr I," *Izvestiia*, 2 September 1937, 4; *Kratkii kurs' istorii SSSR*, ed. A. V. Shestakov (Moscow: Gos. uchebno-pedagog. izd-vo, 1937).

6. See, for instance, Richard Taylor, "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults," in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, ed. Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (London: Routledge, 1993), 88; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Introduction: On Power and Culture," in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 9–11; Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1947), 167–81. Timasheff's "Great Retreat" thesis fails to explain this propaganda campaign's selectivity, politicization, or goal of reinforcing party and state legitimacy. That said, such suspicions were not uncommon among members of the left-leaning Soviet intelligentsia—see chapter 21.

7. Stephen Kotkin ignores the high profile of films such as *Peter I* in his epic study of Stalinist "civilization" in Magnitogorsk despite the fact that one of his primary informants, John Scott, described seeing one of them in his memoirs. Compare Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel*, ed. Stephen Kotkin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 236. David Hoffmann more readily acknowledges the degree to which the advancement of such heroes called into question the USSR's commitment to class consciousness and internationalism—see his *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 163–66.

8. Many have overlooked this emphasis on russocentric myths, imagery, and iconography during the late 1930s, linking it instead to 1941's exigencies of war. See Harold Swayze, *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946–1959* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 28; Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 49–61; Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society—The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 181; Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941–1945* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1984), 120, 249–50; Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 12, 17, 41, 66; Stephen Carter, *Russian Nationalism: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (London: Pinter, 1990), 51; John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London: Longman, 1991), 69; Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic, 1994), 63; Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 255–57; E. Iu. Zubkova, "Mir mnenii sovetskogo cheloveka, 1945–1948: po materialam TsK VKP(b)," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 3 (1998): 34.

9. A. M. Dubrovskii, "Kak Dem'ian Bednyi ideologicheskuiu oshibku sovershil," in *Otechestvennaia kul'tura i istoricheskaia nauka XVIII–XX vekov: Sbornik statei* (Briansk: BGPU, 1996): 143–51; Maureen Perrie, "Nationalism and History: The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia," in *Russian Nationalism Past and Present*, ed. Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 107–28; Kevin Platt and David Brandenberger, "Terribly Romantic, Terribly Progressive or Terribly Tragic? Rehabilitating Ivan IV under I. V. Stalin, 1937–1953," *Russian Review* 58, no. 4 (1999): 635–54; Stephen Moeller-Sally, "'Klassicheskoe nasledie' v epokhu sotsrealizma, ili pokhozhdenniia Gogolia v strane bol'shevikov," in *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon*, ed. Hans Günther and Evgenii Dobrenko (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2000), 509–22; Serhy Yekelchuk, "Diktat and Dialogue in Stalinist Culture: Staging Patriotic Historical Opera in Soviet Ukraine (1936–1954)," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 3 (2000): 597–624; Joan Neuberger, "The Politics of Bewilderment: 'Ivan the Terrible' in 1945," in *Eisenstein at 100: A Reconsideration*, ed. Al LaValley and Barry Scherr (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 227–52; Maureen Perrie, *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Stephen Moeller-Sally, *Gogol's Afterlife: The Evolution of a Classic in Imperial and Soviet Russia* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002); Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004).

10. For a detailed examination of the assimilation of Stalinist texts on tsarist history to current conditions, see Kevin M. F. Platt, "History, Inertia and the Unexpected: Recycling Russia's Despots," *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 1 (2004): 130–50.

11. See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 34–35, 72, 119, 136–55, 148, 8–10; idem, “Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan,” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 205–6.

12. Evgenii Dobrenko, “The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste; or, Who ‘Invented’ Socialist Realism?” in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 153–64; idem, *The Making of the State Reader*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), esp. chap. 3.

13. On the emergence of russocentrism and the heroic in Soviet propaganda, see Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, chaps. 2–3, 5.

14. D. L. Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky, “‘The People Need a Tsar’: The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931–1941,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998): 875–76; Frank Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Folklore and Pseudo-folklore of the Stalin Era* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

15. A. A. Zhdanov toned down triumphalist commentary on peasant rebellions while re-editing Shestakov’s seminal textbook on the history of the USSR—see pages 20, 45, 55, 64, 73, 93–94, 104 and 134 of the text’s June 1937 page proofs, stored at RGASPI, f. 77, op. 1, d. 854.

16. For a rather schematic discussion of the rehabilitations as the party’s “endorsement of the high culture of the [pre-revolutionary] intelligentsia,” see Fitzpatrick, “Introduction: On Power and Culture,” 9–11; Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*, 167–81.

17. In a sense, of course, they did. Although the classics of Socialist Realism were never removed from circulation, virtually all were savaged by the censor during the period—see Herman Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917–1991* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 51–140. Korchagin and Chumalov were the heroes of N. Ostrovskii’s *How the Steel was Forged* and F. Gladkov’s *Cement*, respectively.

18. Fear of non-Russian nationalism—a major motivating factor for the Great Terror in the national republics—may provide part of the explanation for why the rehabilitation campaign on the all-union level focused almost exclusively on Russian heroes after 1937. Some republics did promote their own historical heroes during the late 1930s, but these rehabilitations were explicitly subordinated to the russocentric vision that dominated historical propoaganda on the all-union level. Further evidence of the russocentrism that underscored this campaign is visible in the fact that non-Russian heroes were seldom celebrated outside of their respective republics with anything close to the attention afforded to the Peters and Pushkins of the Russian tradition.

19. Linda Colley discusses the political usefulness of long-dead heroes in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 168–69.