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Soviet Social Mentalité and Russocentrism on the Eve of War, 1936-1941

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In January 1939, the theater critic V. Blium wrote to Stalin in despair that:

> "Socialist patriotism sometimes and in some places is starting to display all the characteristics of racial nationalism... [Our people] don't understand that to beat the enemy fascist, we must under no circumstances use his weapon (racism), but a far superior weapon – internationalist socialism."[1]

What had provoked such a letter? Soviet society witnessed a major ideological about-face during the mid-to-late 1930s as russocentric etatism superseded earlier internationalist slogans. Nevskii, Peter, Kutuzov and Pushkin had joined Lenin, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Frunze and Dzerzhinskii in a newly-integrated Soviet pantheon of heroes which aimed to co-opt charismatic elements of the tsarist past.[2] Blium found this shift – often referred to as the "great retreat"[3] – to be a betrayal of Communist ideals.

Despite wide-spread awareness of this ideological transformation in scholarly circles, many recent works on the 1930s contend that at least until the outset of war in 1941, socialist ideals (internationalism, class, "Soviet patriotism") functioned as the principle signifiers of Soviet social identity.[4] One recent study observes that "what stands out about the powerful

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[1] "Glubokouvazhaemyi Iosif Vissarionovich! (from Blium)" (31 January 1939), in: Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii (hereafter RTsKhIDNI), fond 17, opis' 120, delo 348, listy 63–65. See my forthcoming publication (with KAREN PETRONE) of the letter in: Voprosy istorii.

[2] The evolution of the official historical line reveals that this era's reliance on Russian imagery, myths, and artifacts was a pragmatic move to construct a single historical narrative on the pre-revolutionary era. The party hierarchy viewed the co-option of imperial charisma and even Russian nationalist rhetoric as the most expedient way to mobilize popular patriotic sentiments and loyalty among the USSR's poorly-educated citizenry. Chauvinistic aspects of this campaign, which have been frequently used to label Stalin, A. A. Zhdanov and others as closet Russian nationalists, are in fact better understood as fall-out from the party hierarchy's perhaps excessively cynical and calculating rehabilitation of tsarist heroes, legends and regalia; see D. L. BRANDENBERGER, A. M. DUBROVSKY 'The People Need a Tsar': the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931–1941, in: Europe-Asia Studies 50 (1998) No. 5, pp. 873–892. For a more institutional interpretation, see GERHARD SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion: Von der totalitären Diktatur zur nachstalinschen Gesellschaft. Baden-Baden 1986, pp. 153–194.

[3] NICHOLAS TIMASHEFF The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia. New York 1947.

[4] LOWELL TILLET The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities. Chapel Hill 1969, pp. 49–61; CHRISTEL LANE The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case. Cambridge 1981, p. 181; ALEXANDER WERTH Russia at War, 1941–1945. New York 1984, pp. 120, 249–250; TIMOTHY DUNSMORE Soviet Politics, 1945–1953. New York 1984, p. 128; VERA S. DUNHAM In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction. Enlarged and updated edition.

new national identity developed under Stalin was its Soviet, rather than solely Russian, character," ethnic and national identity being subordinated to "a sense of belonging to the Soviet Union."[5] Such analysis requires nuancing in order to acknowledge the full effect of russocentric propaganda in the second half of the 1930s. This article seeks to examine the resonance that the above-mentioned ideological turn-about elicited among Soviet citizens by looking to an array of accounts (letters, diaries, secret police reports) that provide glimpses of popular opinion under Stalin.[6] Admittedly anecdotal, this approach nevertheless holds the most promise for such reception-oriented discussions as there are few other sources available which can detail popularly-held sentiments during the period.[7]

Sarah Davies argues in her recent monograph on popular opinion in prewar Leningrad that Russian national identity before the mid-1930s was a rather amorphous entity. Noting that it was "defined in implicit opposition to other groups such as Jews and Armenians, but was

Durham, London 1990, pp. 12, 17, 41, 66; STEPHEN K. CARTER Russian Nationalism: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow. New York 1990, p. 51; JOHN BARBER, MARK HARRISON The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II. London 1991, p. 69; NINA TUMARKIN The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia. New York 1994, p. 63. A recent book considers the formation of popular Russian national identity to be an even later phenomenon – see YITZHAK BRUDNY Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991. Cambridge, MA 1999, pp. 3, 7, etc.

[5] STEPHEN KOTKIN Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization. Berkeley 1995, pp. 215–230, 235–237, 21–23, here p. 230; IDEM 1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks, in: Journal of Modern History 70 (1998) No. 2, pp. 385–425, here pp. 419–421; IDEM Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia, by SARAH DAVIES [review], in: Europe-Asia Studies 50 (1998) No. 4, pp. 739–742, especially p. 741.

[6] Pioneering work on Soviet popular opinion includes E. IU. ZUBKOVA Obshchestvo i reformy, 1945–1964. Moskva 1993; E. IU. ZUBKOVA Mir mnenii Sovetskogo cheloveka, 1945–1948 gody: po materialam TsK VKP(b), in: Otechestvennaia istoriia (1998) No. 3, pp. 25–39; No. 4, pp. 99–108; G. D. BURDEI Bytovanie istoricheskikh znanii v massovom soznanii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, in: Rossiia v 1941–1945: Problemy istorii i istoriografii – mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh statei. Saratov 1995, pp. 39–54; N. A. LOMAGIN Nastroenie zashchitnikov i naseleniia Leningrada v period oborony goroda, 1941–1942 gg., in: Leningradskaia epopeia. S.-Peterburg 1995, pp. 200–259; IDEM Soldiers at War: German Propaganda and the Morale of the Soviet Army during the Battle for Leningrad, 1941–1944, in: The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies 1206 (1998) passim; S. A. SHINKARCHUK Obshchestvennoe mnenie v Sovetskoi Rossii v 30-e gody (po materialam Severo-zapada). S.-Peterburg 1995; LESLEY RIMMEL Another Kind of Fear – the Kirov Murder and the End of Bread Rationing in Leningrad, in: Slavic Review 56 (1997) No. 3, pp. 481–499; SARAH DAVIES Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1933–1941. Cambridge UK 1997; E. A. OSOKINA Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliia": raspredelenie i rynok v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927–1941. Moskva 1998; and OL'GA VELIKANOVA The Function of Lenin's Image in the Soviet Mass Consciousness, in: Soviet Civilization between Past and Present. Ed. by Mette Bryld and Erik Kulavig. Odense 1998, pp. 13–38. See also my review of Shinkarchuk in: Russian Review 58 (1999) No. 2, pp. 338–339. I differ with Shinkarchuk and Davies on the degree to which any source is representative enough to reliably characterize Soviet public opinion as a whole (even within Leningrad environs). Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence is useful as a means of identifying voiced opinions circulating in the Soviet public and private spheres.

[7] Although one commentator has recently quipped that "the plural of anecdote is not data," such standards are unrealistic for discussions of *mentalité* anywhere in the world at mid-century, systematic public opinion research being a postwar invention of the western democracies. In the absence of reliable statistical surveys, extensive accumulation of admittedly impressionistic accounts remains the only profitable way of assessing popular reception during the Stalin era. On anecdote and data, see ROBERT E. JOHNSON Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization, by SHEILA FITZPATRICK [review], in: Slavic Review 55 (1996) No. 1, pp. 186–188, here p. 187. Generally, see PETER HOLQUIST Anti-Soviet *Svodki* from the Civil War: Surveillance as a shared feature of Russian political culture, in: Russian Review 56 (1997) No. 3, pp. 445–450.

usually not articulated in a more positive way," she concludes that "there was little notion of what Russianness meant for ordinary workers and peasants."[8]

This was hardly a new problem, of course. Before 1917, the autocracy had actually frustrated the emergence of a single mass Russian national identity out of the fear that popularizing an ethnically-based form of solidarity might inadvertently undermine monarchical authority.[9] As a result, negative caricatures of the German enemy did more to unite the empire during the First World War than the clumsy nativist patriotic slogans that were hastily disseminated.[10] Over the course of the first fifteen years of the Soviet experiment, internationalist propaganda similarly discouraged the coalescing of a popular sense of Russian national identity, equating it with "Great Power chauvinism."[11] The lack of a coherent mass identity, boasting a glorious history and triumphant pantheon of semi-mythical patriot-heroes, left Russians with little more in common than their prejudice toward the non-Russian peoples. Davies musters an array of voices from the mid-1930s that illustrates the situation effectively:

> "Look, we are Russians and we are being led by Jews and others – just take Comrade Stalin. He isn't Russian, he's Georgian." [...] "Better if they had killed Stalin – he is an Armenian [!], and Comrade Kirov was a pure Russian." [...] "The majority in the Soviet of Nationalities from the RSFSR will be national minorities – won't they keep the Russians down?"; "I won't vote for Stalin because he isn't Russian and does not defend the interests of the Russian people. One should vote only for Russians;" "Jews and Poles are capable of all kinds of tricks. Where there are non-Russians, there are enemies and wreckers everywhere. As long as nationalities exist, there will be wreckers and enemies." [...] "There is not one sensible person in power – they are all Yids, Armenians, and other *zhuliki* [thieves, swindlers]."[12]

United more by chauvinism than an articulate national identity, when Russians did ascribe characteristics to themselves, they imagined an ethnic community which was colored with an abstract – almost maudlin – fascination with national suffering and the ability to endure hardship. Although Davies acknowledges that the Soviet state attempted to rally this population *after* 1937 with what she terms "Russian nationalist imagery," she leaves the issue unproblematized, explicitly indicating that the problem requires further research.[13]

[8] DAVIES Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia pp. 88–89. Archival material from ethnographic commissions supports similar analysis in FRANCINE HIRSCH Empire of Nations: Colonial Technologies and the Making of the Soviet Union, 1917–1939. Ph.D. diss., Princeton University 1998, pp. 87–88.

[9] HANS ROGGER Nationalism and the State: a Russia Dilemma, in: Comparative Studies in History and Society 4 (1962) No. 3, pp. 253–264; THEODORE R. WEEKS Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914. DeKalb 1996, pp. 4, 9, 11, etc.; ANA SILJAK Rival Visions of the Russian Nation: the Teaching of Russian History, 1890–1917. Ph.D. diss., Harvard University 1997, pp. 279–282.

[10] A. V. BUGANOV Russkaia istoriia v pamiati krest'ian XIX veka i natsional'noe samosoznanie. Moskva 1992; and my review of the book in: Europe-Asia Studies 50 (1998) No. 2, pp. 385–386; HUBERTUS F. JAHN Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I. Ithaca, London 1995, pp. 172–175.

[11] SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion pp. 83–91; TERRY MARTIN An Affirmative Action Empire: Ethnicity and the Soviet State, 1923–1938. Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago 1995, pp. 241–252.

[12] All Davies' material cited in this piece is drawn from komsomol, party and NKVD reports concerned with popular opinion (*obshchestvennoe mnenie*) – see DAVIES Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia pp. 88–89, 136. For similar material, see JEFFREY J. ROSSMAN Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Gender in the Textile Mills of the Ivanovo Industrial Region, 1928–1932. Ph.D. diss., UC-Berkeley 1997, pp. 123–125, 131, 278–279; LESLEY RIMMEL The Kirov Murder and Soviet Society: Propaganda and Popular Opinion in Leningrad, 1934–1935. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania 1995, pp. 128–36 and DAVID L. HOFFMANN Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941. Ithaca, London 1994, pp. 124–125. An anonymous letter published by Mensheviks in Paris dovetails with these sentiments – see M. Natsionalizm povorachivaetsia protiv Stalina i protiv komemigrantov, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 10 February 1934, p. 11.

[13] DAVIES Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia pp. 90, 124–144.

In fact, as A. M. Dubrovskii and I have argued elsewhere, the party hierarchy actually realized the necessity for developing a mass social identity *early* in the 1930s. Responding to the simultaneous need for industrial mobilization and national defense,[14] steps were taken to reconfigure narrow class-based official propaganda in order to stimulate a broader sense of mass patriotic identity. Frustrated by the ineffectiveness or stalling of early campaigns promoting internationalism and "Soviet patriotism," the party hierarchy began to flirt with an etatist ideology expressed through familiar Russian myths, heroes and symbols during a transition period which stretched from early 1934 until late 1937.[15]

As inconsistent and hesitant as official rhetoric was during this time period, it seems that as early as the mid-1930s some of the society's most acute observers were beginning to sense the direction in which Soviet ideology was headed. Some saw the explicit reification of state power and authority in the gradual reappearance of uniforms, epaulettes and hierarchy in Soviet society.[16] Others saw it in the rehabilitation of terms like "motherland" [*rodina*]. According to a letter from Moscow published in the Mensheviks' Parisian "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," an entirely new atmosphere swept through the capital following the announcement of a high-ranking French envoy's impending state visit:

> "They talk about it in Soviet institutions, factory smoking rooms, student dormitories and commuter trains. [...] It's the sense of *national pride. Russia* has again become a Great Power and even such powerful states as France desire her friendship. [...] Narrow-minded bureaucrats in Soviet institutions who had long been quiet now confidently talk of national patriotism, of Russia's historic mission, and of the reviving of the old Franco-Russian alliance, [notions which] are greeted approvingly by their Communist directors. [...] There is clear panic among Communist idealists."[17]

While not as articulate as Trotskii's diagnoses of Stalinism as "Thermidor" and "the revolution betrayed"[18] (or Timasheff's as the "great retreat"), Soviet citizens demonstrated considerable awareness of the increasingly traditionalist aspects of the Soviet state.

Because of the centrality of their field to propaganda efforts, historians devoted considerable time and energy to trying to discern the direction of the emerging ideological line. B. A. Romanov and another Leningrad historian correctly sensed that the new Soviet historical line was to stress imperial Russia's "gathering of peoples" over the centuries, according to an NKVD informant's report.[19] But if some successfully deduced how the new view was to

[14] With eerie precision, Stalin predicted war in ten years' time in 1931. See I. V. STALIN O zadachakh khoziaistvennikov: rech' na pervoi Vsesoiuznoi konferentsii rabotnikov sotsialisticheskoi promyshlennosti, 4-go fevralia 1931, in: Voprosy Leninizma. Moskva 1934, pp. 439–447, here p. 445.

[15] BRANDENBERGER, DUBROVSKY 'The People Need a Tsar': the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology pp. 873–892; and DAVID BRANDENBERGER The Short Course to Modernity: stalinist history textbooks, mass culture and the formation of popular Russian national identity. Ph.D. diss., Harvard University 1999, chapter 2. On the shift in meaning of the term "patriotism," see ERWIN OBERLÄNDER Sowjetpatriotismus und Geschichte. Köln 1967; SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion pp. 106, 172–173.

[16] See the diary entry from November 7, 1935 in A. G. SOLOV'EV Tetradi krasnogo professora (1912–1941 gg.), in: Neizvestnaia Rossiia XX vek. Tom 4. Moskva 1993, pp. 140–228, here pp. 182–183. The introduction of epaulettes is mistakenly discussed as a wartime event in KLAUS MEHNERT Weltrevolution durch Weltgeschichte: die Geschichtslehre des Stalinismus. Kitzingen/Main 1950, pp. 71–72.

[17] A. Sovetskii patriotizm – Legalizatsiia obyvatel'skogo patriotizma, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 25 March 1935, p. 24. See also A. KAZEM-BEK Rossiia, mladorossy i emigratsiia. Paris 1936.

[18] LEON TROTSKY The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and where is it going? London 1937.

[19] "Spetssoobshchenie o reagirovanii leningradskikh istorikov na postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) i SNK SSSR ot 26.I.36 i opublikovanie zamechanii o konspektakh uchebnikov 'Istorii SSSR' i 'Novoi Istorii'" (early 1936), in: Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov v Sankt-Peterburge (hereafter TsGAIPD SPb), f. 24, op. 2v, d. 1829, l. 93. The author is grateful to Sarah Davies for this reference. Romanov and his colleague's awareness of the new centrality of the "gather-

be orchestrated, the ambiguous, shifting nature of the official line in the mid-1930s caught many veteran party members unawares. Instructive is the case of N. I. Bukharin. Despite major political defeats in the late 1920s, in the mid-1930s Bukharin retained an influential position at "Izvestiia" and remained deeply engaged with ideological issues including the development of the all-important history catechism.[20] Nevertheless, in February 1936 he came under fire for an article characterizing the Russians before 1917 as "a nation of Oblomovs" and for noting in another piece that minority distrust of Russians was a natural consequence of tsarist colonial policies. Despite the fact that both themes had long been a part of Bolshevik discourse (Lenin had been particularly fond of the Oblomov reference), Bukharin's public scolding warned of the mounting sensitivity of these subjects.[21] Other reversals soon confirmed the extent to which the traditional line was in flux. M. A. Bulgakov's "Ivan Vasilievich," a comedy which poked fun at the Muscovite state-builder Ivan the Terrible, was canceled before it could open that spring.[22] Five months later, the staging of Dem'ian Bednyi's "Bogatyri," a satire on the legendary drunkenness surrounding epic Russian heroes and the coming of Christianity to Rus', cost the author his career.[23] Others writing on historical

ing of peoples" myth stemmed from their having attended a Politburo discussion on history textbooks in March 1934. As this meeting, A. S. Bubnov, the Commissar of Education, proposed that the official historical line concern not just the linear pre-revolutionary "history of the USSR," but a broader and more inclusive "history of the peoples of Russia." Interrupting him, Stalin disagreed and asserted the need for a focus on a single thousand-year political narrative, noting simplistically that "the Russian people in the past gathered other peoples together and have begun that sort of gathering again now."

Stalin's comment on the Russian people's historic consolidation of non-Russian minorities during the tsarist era echoes a similar statement in his famous 1913 essay on the national question. Striking is his expansion of the analysis in 1934 to identify a leading role for Russians in *Soviet* construction. See I. V. STALIN Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros, in: Marksizm i natsional'no-kolonial'nyi vopros: sbornik izbrannykh statei i rechei. Moskva 1934, pp. 3–45, here p. 10. The account of the 1934 Politburo meeting is drawn from the diary of S. A. Piontkovskii, which is held in the inaccessible archives of the former NKVD (TsA FSB RF, d. R-8214) and is excerpted in ALEKSEI LITVIN Bez prava na mysl': istorik v epokhu Bol'shogo terrora – ocherk sudeb. Kazan' 1994, p. 56.

[20] TsGAIPD SPb f. 24, op. 2v, d. 1829, l. 92; and DAVID BRANDENBERGER Who Killed Pokrovskii (the second time)? The Prelude to the Denunciation of the Father of Soviet Marxist Historiography, January 1936, in: Revolutionary Russia 11 (1998) No. 1, pp. 67–73. Another embattled Old Bolshevik, K. B. Radek, actually led the drafting of a textbook on the history of colonialism which was never published.

[21] Bukharin's statement on colonialism was in the context of an argument suggesting that the Russian people were "the first among equals" within the Soviet family of nations – see N. BUKHARIN Mogushchestvennaia federatsiia, in: "Izvestiia," 2 February 1936, p. 1 – while his use of the "nation of Oblomovs" epithet is contained in an article about Lenin – see IDEM Nash vozhd', nash uchitel', nash otets," ibidem, 21 January 1936, p. 2. He was assailed on February 10 and 12 in "Pravda" and published an apology two days later – see Ob odnoi gniloi kontseptsii, in: "Pravda," 10 February 1936, p. 3; A. LEONT'EV Tsenneishii vklad v sokrovishchnitsu marksizma-leninizma, ibidem 12 February 1936, p. 4; and N. BUKHARIN Otvet na vopros, in: "Izvestiia," 14 February 1936, p. 1. On Lenin's use of the Oblomov reference, see V. I. LENIN Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. Tom 1–55. Moskva 1958–1970, tom 43, p. 228; tom 44, pp. 365, 398; tom 45, pp. 3–4, 13. For more on the incident, see the somewhat hyperbolic ROY MEDVEDEV Nikolai Bukharin: The Last Years. Trans.: A. D. P. Briggs. New York 1980, pp. 103–106; and L. DYMERSKAIA Demarsh protiv Stalina? (o povesti Bruno Iasenskogo 'Nos'), in: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie (1998) No. 3, pp. 144–154.

[22] Dnevnik Eleny Bulgakovoi. Ed. by V. I. Losev and L. Ianovskaia. Moskva 1990, p. 120. The argument that the play was cancelled because the party hierarchy had lost confidence in Bulgakov himself strikes the reader as excessively teleological. See IA. S. LUR'E Ivan Groznyi i drevnerusskaia literatura v tvorchestve M. Bulgakova, in: Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury. Tom 45. S.-Peterburg 1992, pp. 315–321, here p. 321.

[23] Bednyi's gentle deriding of the Russian ethnicity had gotten him into trouble as early as 1931 when Stalin and L. Z. Mekhlis chastised him in private and public, respectively – see Stalin Tov. Dem'ianu Bednomu (Vyderzhki iz pis'ma), in: Sochineniia. Tom 13. Moskva 1951, pp. 23–27; L. MEKHLIS Za perestroiku raboty RAPP, in: "Pravda," 24 November 1931, pp. 2–3. The published version of

topics were arrested outright.[24] While the details of each case are interesting, more salient is the fact that even the most savvy of the Soviet intellectual elite were finding the orientation of the emerging line difficult to gauge. Only with the denunciation of Bednyi did they begin to realize the perils of engaging in "insulting depictions of our country's past" which contradicted the etatist dimensions of the developing official line.[25] K. F. Shteppa, teaching at the time at Kiev State University, recalled later that :

> "The cases of Demian Bedny and N. Bukharin indicate[d] that the shift on the historical front was the beginning of a new era in the official world view. It was a swerve toward Russian patriotism – not only toward the justification but the canonization of the Russian historical past [and] toward a cult of [the] people's heroes. [...] Moreover, this new trend was not limited to history alone, but was extended to the fields of literature and art."[26]

The definitive statement on this ideological turn-about – A. V. Shestakov's "Short Course on the History of the USSR" – appeared a year later, a textbook which promised to authoritatively script the Stalin era's historical narrative.[27] Although the Shestakov text was lauded in the official press for its presentation of the history of *all* the Soviet peoples instead of just the dominant Russian majority, the text's agenda actually precluded the realization of such claims.[28] In fact, its stridently etatist russocentrism troubled a Magnitogorsk student named G. Kh. Bikbulatov enough to provoke him to address the following concerns to Shestakov himself:

> "The textbook is entitled *A History of the Peoples of the USSR*,[29] but according to its contents it is nevertheless not a history of the peoples. [...] The conquering of one region after another by the Russian autocracy is shown in the textbook, as is the incorporation of various national states like the Caucasus and eastern [ones] in chronological order. But in order to successfully present the history of the peoples of the USSR, it is necessary to direct some [more] attention to this question, particularly considering when textbooks on the peoples of the USSR will be compiled."[30]

Stalin's letter to Bednyi is a gentrified version of the original correspondence – see RTsKhIDNI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 2931. On Bednyi's fall from grace, see EDWARD J. BROWN The Proletarian Crisis in Russian Literature. New York 1953, pp. 188–190; A. M. DUBROVSKII Kak Dem'ian Bednyi ideologicheskuiu oshibku sovershil, in: Otechestvennaia kul'tura i istoricheskaia nauka XVIII–XX vekov. Briansk 1996, pp. 143–151; LEONID MAKSIMENKOV Sumbur vmesto muzyki: stalinskaia kul'turnaia revoliutsiia, 1936–1938. Moskva 1997, pp. 212–222; Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chueva. Ed. by F. Chuev. Moskva 1991, p. 269.

[24] LITVIN Bez prava na mysl'; A. N. ARTIZOV Sud'by istorikov shkoly M. N. Pokrovskogo (seredina 1930-kh godov), in: Voprosy istorii (1994) No. 7, pp. 34–48; and IU. P. SHARAPOV Litsei v sokol'nikakh: ocherk istorii IFLI. Moskva 1995, pp. 140–150.

[25] P. M. KERZHENTSEV Fal'sifikatsiia narodnogo proshlogo (o 'Bogatyriakh' Dem'iana Bednogo), in: "Pravda," 15 November 1936, p. 3. This move had been foreshadowed by the early 1936 condemnation of Pokrovskii's historiographic "school" for "leftist internationalism." This referred to those associated with M. N. Pokrovskii during the 1920s who had had a reputation for being highly critical of tsarism and the Russian people's willing participation in the administration of the empire. On the denunciation, see V. A. BYSTRIANSKII Kriticheskie zamechaniia ob uchebnikakh po istorii SSSR, in: "Pravda," 1 February 1936, p. 2. For its role in clarifying critical issues, see E. V. GUTNOVA Na istfake, in: Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Series 8 (1993) No. 6, pp. 63–77, here pp. 73–74.

[26] KONSTANTIN SHTEPPA Russian Historians and the Soviet State. New Brunswick NJ 1962, p. 127.

[27] Kratkii kurs istorii SSSR. Ed. by A. V. Shestakov. Moskva 1937. I treat the production of this textbook in considerable detail in my The Short Course to Modernity, pp. 62–88, 374–393.

[28] On the alleged "multicultural" focus of the text, see A. K. Kratkii kurs istorii SSSR [review], in: Bol'shevik (1937) No. 17, pp. 84–96, especially pp. 95, 87. The statist orientation of the new textbook is more accurately appraised in IU. OSOKIN Stalinizatsiia istorii, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 14 October 1937, pp. 4–9, especially p. 8.

[29] Bikbulatov was using a copy of the Shestakov textbook issued under a different title for adults.

[30] "Tov. Shestakov (from Bikbulatov)" (1 April 1938), Arkhiv Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (hereafter Arkhiv RAN), f. 638, op. 3, d. 330, l. 35.

Others, however, welcomed the sea-change in the official view of Soviet history. Shestakov received massive amounts of mail relating to the project, much of which was congratulatory.[31] More telling is the fact that while Bikbulatov was addressing his critique to Shestakov, D. P. Petrov, a commander in the Red Army reserves, was denouncing two Orientalists – A. I. Artaruni and S. L. Vel'dman – to the army's political directorate. They had apparently referred "negatively to the Russian historical process in general, to the process of the Russian state's formation, and to the will of the Russian working class, which transformed [the Russian state] into the Soviet Union and the motherland of Socialism."[32] Petrov saw the new official line for what it was: rehabilitated, Russian imperial history was to extend legitimacy and pedigree to the Soviet experiment. That is not to say that press coverage of Soviet minorities ceased. Instead, it shifted in focus to emphasize exotic or archaic cultural forms, complementing a developing press campaign which labeled the Russian people "the first among equals."[33] Soviet citizens viewed non-Russians accordingly – a party functionary and would-be writer named A. G. Solov'ev aimed a barb at Dzhambul, one of the most orientalized[34] figures of the day:

> "The papers are describing the awarding of the Order of Lenin to the Kazakh bard Dzhambul. Such a rarity! A wizened old fellow, illiterate, unable to read or write, becomes a famous poet. That's talent for you. And I don't have anything like it."[35]

Although few people expressed feelings as bitter as Solov'ev in regard to the non-Russian peoples, many of their statements nevertheless reflect considerable naïveté and a tendency to objectify the minority cultures and their representatives. Entries in the diaries of the writers

[31] See the letters stored under ibidem ll. 62, 83, 88, 89, 90, 96, 99, 103, 104, etc. When a related set of textbooks was issued for higher education in 1940, the scientist V. I. Vernadskii wrote at length in his diary about his mixed impressions: "I finished the first volume of the 'History of the USSR.' The strident tendentiousness is very obvious, but, on the other hand, this revising [of the history of the state] from a new point of view is very enlightening. That the 'classics of Marxism' [are referred to] on equal terms with scholarly findings creates the strange impression of naive cynicism. [Still,] Marx and Engels are interesting in places. It is very uneven, but in general, it is probably true that this [interpretation] is in more agreement with reality than the courses by Kliuchevskii, Platonov or Solov'ev. [A sense of] official patriotism is very evident. There are some interesting nuances to the Ukrainian question. Aside from that, one is astounded by the moral poverty of the XVII and XVIII century tsars. Initially, [the book is slated] for the masses (75 000 copies). I was able to buy a copy only though connections (via [B. D.] Grekov)." See his diary entry from April 15, 1940 in: V. I. VERNADSKII Dnevnik 1940 goda, in: Druzhba narodov (1993) No. 9, pp. 173–194, here. p. 176.

[32] Artaruni and Fel'dman supposedly conducted anti-Soviet agitation "under the guise [*pod vidom*]" of discussing tsarist colonial policies. "Zaiavlenie (from Petrov)" (10 January 1938), in: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (hereafter RGVA), f. 9, op. 29s, d. 355, l. 68, see also l. 69. Petrov was, of course, glossing Stalin's famous 1924 essay Ob osnovakh leninizma, in: Voprosy Leninizma. Moskva 1935, pp. 1–74, here pp. 49, 72–74.

[33] First used in the mid-thirties, the "first among equals" rhetoric became prevalent late in the decade. See RSFSR, in: "Pravda," 1 February 1936, p. 1.

[34] Generally, see EDWARD SAID Orientalism. New York 1979. For different readings of the Soviet exotic "other," see MARTIN An Affirmative Action Empire pp. 928, 944–945, 949; KAREN PETRONE 'Life has become more joyous, comrades': Politics and culture in Soviet celebrations, 1934–1939. Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 1994, pp. 170–173; MICHAEL G. SMITH Cinema for the 'Soviet East': National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani film, in: Slavic Review 56 (1997) No. 4, pp. 645–678, here pp. 669–678; GREG CASTILLO Peoples at an Exhibition: Soviet Architecture and the National Question, in: Socialist Realism without Shores (South Atlantic Quarterly Special Issue Edition) 94 (1995) No. 3, pp. 715–746; YURI SLEZKINE Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North. Ithaca, London 1994.

[35] Diary entry from November 21, 1936 – see SOLOV'EV Tetradi krasnogo professora (1912–1941 gg.) pp. 189–190.

V. P. Stavskii and K. I. Chukovskii stand out in this regard.[36] More outspoken was the conductor S. A. Samosud, who was overheard by an informant criticizing a Ukrainian dance troupe for having "no high, serious art" during a springtime celebration of that republic's culture in the Soviet capital. His companion, M. I. Rostovtsev, was even more blunt in his chauvinism, grumbling that "now in general they [the leaders] are praising and rewarding ethnics. They give medals to Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians – everyone except Russians."[37] A letter addressed to Zhdanov in 1938 indicates that such sentiments in regard to the non-Russian peoples were not restricted to white-collar and intelligentsia circles, a long-time worker in Leningrad complaining derisively to the party leader that "you must come to the factories; that would be more useful than your presence at the academic theater in Moscow ([for a] *dekada* of Azerbaidzhani art)."[38] More obnoxious was Milovanov, a soldier in the Gorki regiment working in the garrison canteen, who served the Kazakh Khaibulaev only a half a plate of borscht. When the latter protested, the former declared: "You are a Kazakh and that means half-human so I've given you what you deserve."[39] As such examples indicate, the press' orientalization of non-Russian cultures trivialized them in the eyes of Soviet citizens, reinforcing popular russocentrism.

While such trends are quite clear in hindsight, the ambiguity of the situation during the ideological transition is also very visible in the sources. If some quickly grasped the implications of the valorization of Russian history and culture, many others initially resisted it, despite the statist russocentrism in the press that had been increasingly prominent since the Pushkin centennial in early 1937.[40] A certain Girfand's question at a Leningrad lecture revealed typical concerns about the emerging line:

> "Recently, in an array of journalistic articles about Suvorov, he has been referred to as a people's hero [*narodnyi geroi*]. Without doubt, Suvorov was a brilliant military leader who never experienced a defeat, but at the same time he was himself an instrument of tsarist politics in Europe, [particularly] Gendarme of Europe politics. So is it correct to call him a people's hero?"[41]

Equally instructive is the reaction of Leningrad *oblast'* school inspector Karpova, who failed to appreciate the magnitude of the changes underway in her 1937 complaint that Prince Sviatoslav was being "depicted in an array of schools as having been a superior prince who slept with his soldiers, ate with his soldiers, [etc., –] the children speak of him with such high

[36] Diary of V. P. Stavskii, in: Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s. Ed. by Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya and Thomas Lahusen. New York 1995, pp. 228, 234; K. CHUKOVSKII Dnevnik, 1930–1969. Tom 2. Moskva 1994, p. 145.

[37] TsGAIPD SPb f. 24, op. 2v, d. 1839, ll. 272–3, quoted in SHEILA FITZPATRICK Everyday Stalinism – Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s. New York 1999, pp. 168–169; see the description of a different complaint on p. 181 and note 61.

[38] TsGAIPD SPb f. 24, op. 2g, d. 149, l. 129, quoted in DAVIES Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia p. 128.

[39] "Nach. Osobogo Otdela NKVD SSSR St. maioru gos.bezopasnosti t. Bochkovu, 'Dokladnaia zapiska o nedochetakh, sviazannykh s prokhozhdeniem voennoi sluzhby krasnoarmeitsami natsmenami v chastiiakh, obsluzhivaemykh OO NKVD MVO'" (19 May 1939), RGVA f. 9, op. 39s, d. 75, l. 56. Other examples of interethnic hostility continue until l. 59.

[40] On the rehabilitation of A. S. Pushkin, see my 'The People's Poet': Russocentric Populism during the 1937 Pushkin Commemoration, in: Russian History / Histoire russe 26 (1999) No. 1–2, forthcoming. Note the reaction from abroad in V. ALEKSANDROVA Pushkin i sovetskoe obshchestvo, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 17 January 1937, pp. 4–5; and IDEM Literaturnaia biurokratiia nastupaet, ibidem 25 March 1937, p. 4.

[41] Shestakov's textbook indicated that it was. See Girfand's note passed to A. V. Shestakov during a public lecture between 1938–1940 at Arkhiv RAN f. 638, op. 3, d. 333, l. 21. A similar question – "Were Suvorov and Kutuzov national heroes?" – was asked at a different lecture, ibidem l. 126.

praise that it is simply revolting [*vozmutitel'no*]."[42] Moreover, the confusion was allowed to persist for months, "Pravda" waiting until mid-January 1938 to hint at the new line when it argued vociferously for the reinstatement of a teacher who had been dismissed for russo-centric remarks in class.[43] The description of a dispute on a crowded Moscow-bound train in early 1938 recorded in the diary of M. M. Prishvin provides one of the most interesting glimpses of the impact that the ideological changes were having on the popular level:

> "[...] somewhere in the stench [of the train car] there was a marvelous choir singing an ancient Russian song. This song tugged at the heartstrings of many of the simple people [aboard], some crooning along, some keeping quiet, some snoring, some singing quietly to themselves, [an effect which was] not only not distracting, but indeed intensified the power of the song – the people sang. During a pause between songs, before the beginning of a new one, one somewhat-tipsy person said out loud:
> 'You sing well, but it's all old stuff – he who thinks of the past is a fool [*kto staroe pomianet, tomu glaz von*].'
> From the choir came the answer: 'But he who forgets the past is a bigger fool [*A kto staroe zabudet, tomu dva glaza von*].'
> 'But you're wrong in saying that,' said the first guy, 'we need cheerfulness for our new way of life and look what you're doing: you're resurrecting the past. Forget the past.'
> 'What about Pushkin?' asked a new voice.
> This stymied the partisan of the new ways for a moment, but he quickly recovered: 'Pushkin was an isolated case. Pushkin managed to foresee our time way back then and stood for it. He was an exception.'
> 'And Lomonosov?'
> 'Also an exception.'
> 'No, that's already the second, and then you can't forget Peter the First' – a third.
> And on and on they counted – pure logic. A feeling of discomfort swept through the train car: it was clear to everyone that Pushkin was not an exception and that one could not forget the folk song. But someone had raised the question and since he had, it was necessary to find a way out – the issue was no longer one of pure logic. Just then the choir led into the song '[*Shiroka*] *strana moia rodnaia*' and everyone joined in eagerly, the song being familiar to one and all."[44]

This account indicates the extent to which the official rehabilitation of historical Russian heroes and culture during 1936 and 1937 was resonating within at least the Russian-speaking segments of Soviet society. Projected through the lens of party propaganda, Pushkin, Lomonosov and Peter had found their way into the popular mind on its most basic level as Red Russian hybrids.[45]

Perhaps some of Prishvin's fellow travelers had seen V. Petrov's "Peter the First" the preceding fall, a film which had hit the screens just as Shestakov's history text was beginning to roll off the presses. Based on a script by A. N. Tolstoi, it was actually part of a cycle of Petrine-oriented works by the same author that included plays and a novel in addition to its film adaptation. These works had a high profile even in social circles not known for their appreciation of literary culture: a regiment commissar named Otianovskii, for instance, admitted at one point in late 1939 that "Peter the First" had been the only book he had read

[42] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia territorial'nykh inspektorov s otchetami o proverke raboty nachal'noi shkoly po itogam pervoi chetverti" (20 November 1937), Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii (hereafter GARF), f. 2306, op. 70, d. 2427, l. 11. Similar examples of such confusion are housed in RGVA, f. 9, op. 29s, d. 452, l. 57; op. 36s, d. 3778, l. 64.

[43] N. KRUZHKOV Prestuplenie starogo uchitelia, in: "Pravda," 19 January 1938, p. 4. The author is grateful to E. Thomas Ewing for this reference.

[44] M. M. PRISHVIN Dnevniki, 1905–1954, in: Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh. Tom 8. Moskva 1986, p. 334.

[45] M. V. Lomonosov was the focus of Genial'nyi syn velikogo russkogo naroda, in: "Pravda," 18 November 1936, p. 1; on Peter, see below. Especially Pushkin suffered the indignity of being included in Stalinist mass culture in all sorts of iconoclastic contexts, e.g. G. V. Aleksandrov's 1940 box-office hit "Shining Path."

during the previous year.[46] Although the film adaptation initially confused some audience members with its heroic portrayal of representatives of the old regime,[47] observers soon grasped Tolstoi's suggestive analogy between the Stalin revolution and Peter's reform efforts.[48] When the film was made available to collective farmers in the Nurlatsk *raion* outside of Kazan', some eight thousand peasants streamed to make-shift theaters to see it. Perhaps because of the film, workers in a study circle at the Putilov factory in Leningrad displayed a keen interest in the epoch of Peter the Great, especially "how Peter fought the Swedes, founded the Russian navy, etc." The same was reported at Moscow's Kaganovich Ball-Bearing Plant.[49]

"Peter the First" was quickly followed by an even more important film in the same patriotic genre: "Aleksandr Nevskii," shot by S. M. Eisenstein.[50] Released in 1938, it was greeted with great enthusiasm. "Pravda" reported that:

> "Aleksandr Nevskii has come down to us in the history of the Russian people as a military and political leader. He was not a usurer or a slave trader like the majority of the Novgorodian princes. He was a military strategist [*organizator*] who defeated the Swedes and Germans. He strengthened our country's north-western borders. His descendants understand and treasure this; this is why Komsomol members in 1938 applaud with such gratitude."[51]

While many commentators have noted that films with everyday subject matter such as G. V. Aleksandrov's "Circus" and "Volga-Volga" eclipsed more explicitly propagandistic pieces

[46] "Dokladnaia zapiska po obsledovaniiu 55 Aviabrigady" (5 May 1939), RGVA f. 9, op. 29s, d. 452, l. 224. For A. M. Gor'kii's statement concerning the popularity of A. N. Tolstoi's Petrine-oriented work, see Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd Sovetskikh pisatelei, 1934 – Stenograficheskii otchet. Moskva 1934, p. 225; see also P. ERIN Iz opyta prepodavaniia v shkole, in: Istoriia v srednei shkole (1934) No. 1, p. 61.

[47] Although some observers like G. V. Shtange were impressed by Petrov's film, others were disturbed enough to ask A. V. Shestakov during public lectures how he felt about not only "Peter the First," but "Aleksandr Nevskii" as well. The historian N. M. Druzhinin and graduate student (and future historian) A. G. Man'kov were similarly puzzled, while Magnitogorsk's John Scott mistook "Peter" for a foreign film due to its iconoclastic subject matter. See Diary of Galina Vladimirovna Shtange, in: Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s, p. 210; Arkhiv RAN, f. 638, op. 3, d. 333, ll. 4, 6, 120, 123, 125, 130, 136; Dnevnik Nikolaia Mikhailovicha Druzhinina, in: Voprosy istorii (1997) No. 7, pp. 121–143, here pp. 132, 129–30; A. G. MAN'KOV Iz dnevnika, 1938–1941 gg., in: Zvezda (1995) No. 11, pp. 167–199, here pp. 173, 176, 181; JOHN SCOTT Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel. Bloomington 1989, p. 236.

[48] Unafraid of anachronism, Tolstoi once wrote that "in every historical moment, we must take what we need, discard what's archaic, and extract that which will resonate in our epoch." A. N. TOLSTOI Pisatel' i teatr, in: Teatr i dramaturgiia (1934) No. 4, p. 12. I. L. Solonevich noticed the peculiarities of Tolstoi's approach to historical drama in emigration, writing in 1951 that "psychologically, you see here Stalinist Russia, which by Petrine methods is realizing the Petrine rallying-call: 'catch up to and overtake the leading capitalist countries!' Stalin becomes the continuer of Peter's policies, sort of a Iosif Petrovich, who accomplishes the affairs of the 'Great Transformer.'" I. L. SOLONEVICH Narodnaia monarkhiia. Buenos-Aires 1951, reprint Moskva 1991, pp. 427–428. See generally V. ALEKSANDROVA Na putiakh zaversheniia revoliutsii, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 28 May 1938, p. 11; IDEM Poteriannaia i vozvrashchennaia rodina, ibidem 14 June 1938, pp. 4–6.

[49] Zvukovoe kino v kolkhozakh, in: "Pravda," 12 November 1938, p. 3; Bol'shoi interes k politicheskim zaniatiam (Gruppovoi partorg 4-go uchastka, sverlovshchik tov. Morshchinin), ibidem 19 March 1938, p. 3; V zavodskoi biblioteke, in: "Vecherniaia Moskva," 10 October 1938, p. 2.

[50] Before its release, Eisenstein's "Nevskii" was assailed by several historian-consultants for its tendency to essentialize historical events and interpolate overtly anti-German and anti-Japanese imagery into the medieval tale. R. IURENEV Sergei Eizenshtein – zamysly, fil'my, metod. Tom 2. Moskva 1988, pp. 144–145. Eisenstein revealed his political intentions behind "Aleksandr Nevskii" in S. EIZENSHTEIN Patriotizm – nasha tema, in: "Kino," 11 November 1938, pp. 3–4.

[51] M. KOLTSOV Narod-bogatyr', in: "Pravda," 7 November 1938, p. 2.

in the mid-1930s,[52] the return of the Russian historical hero gave new life to the Soviet political cinema almost immediately. "Nevskii" drew record audiences – V. S. Ivanov, the director of Moscow's Art Cinema, told a newspaper correspondent that "not since the days of Chapaev has there been such an enormous flood of viewers."[53] Far away in the Rostov *oblast'* town of Shakhty, an amateur correspondent wrote that long lines were forming every day outside of the local movie theater's ticket office some two hours before the window would even open. Twenty-one thousand people apparently had seen the film during the first seven days of its run in this provincial town.[54] Elsewhere, people were reported to be cueing up to see the film two or even three times in order to relive the experience.[55] In Moscow, tickets remained virtually impossible to obtain for weeks after the film's première.[56]

"Vecherniaia Moskva" ran stories regarding "Aleksandr Nevskii" almost daily in late November and early December of 1938. One such piece asked audience members what they had thought of the film, answers which illustrate the extent to which russocentrism was becoming an intrinsic element of Soviet patriotism:

> "The film touched me to the depths of my soul. It is a genuine masterpiece [*shedevr*] of Soviet cinematography. The unforgettable 'Battle on the Ice' episode characterizes the patriotism of the Russian people, their unwavering bravery and their deep love for their motherland." [Comrade Shliakhov, Red Army officer.]
>
> "A spectacular film has been created which tells in a simple and beautiful way of the power and heroism of the Russian people. This film fills [its viewer] with a sense of pride for our great motherland." [V. Vagdasarov, schoolboy from School No. 26.]
>
> "The greatness of the ideas and the grandiose nature of their staging make the film one of the best means of mobilizing our people in the struggle with those who in 1938 have forgotten about the delicate lessons of the year 1242. May the contemporary 'mongrel knights' [*psyrytsary*][57] remember the tragic and shameful role played by their forefathers, the 'crusader-bastards' [*krestonosnye svolochi*]!" [P. Lunin, engineer.]
>
> "'Who comes to us with the sword shall perish by the sword.' These words of Aleksandr Nevskii's, pronounced seven hundred years ago, are relevant even now. We will answer every blow of the enemy with a triple-blow. The Russian people have [always] beaten, are beating [now] and will [always] beat all their enemies." [Comrade Galotov, metal worker in the Gorbunov factory.][58]

As visible in the above-cited statements, the impact of "Aleksandr Nevskii" was powerful enough for clichés from the film to be assimilated into the discourse of the era. In one case, after Leningrad teacher E. E. Kozlova finished describing Nevskii's 1242 repulsing of the Teutonic knights, children from her class announced with confidence that if any enemies "are

[52] See, for instance, SHINKARCHUK Obshchestvennoe mnenie v Sovetskoi Rossii v 30-e gody pp. 123–124; RICHARD TAYLOR Ideology and Popular Culture in Soviet Cinema, in: The Red Screen: Politics, Society and Art in Soviet Cinema. Ed. by Ann Lawton. London, New York 1992, pp. 42–65, here pp. 61–62; PETER KENEZ Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953. New York 1992, p. 162.

[53] L. V. Zritel' o fil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii', in: "Vecherniaia Moskva," 4 December 1938, p. 3; MAYA TUROVSKAYA The Tastes of Soviet Moviegoers during the 1930s, in: Late Soviet Culture: from Perestroika to Novostroika. Ed. by Thomas Lahusen with Gene Kuperman. Durham, London 1993, pp. 95–108, here p. 103.

[54] "Redaktoru gazety 'Pravda'" (9 January 1939), Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (hereafter RGALI), f. 1923, op. 1, d. 2289, ll. 27–29ob.

[55] "O kinofil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii' (by I. A. Sudnikov)" (30 December 1938), ibidem l. 32.

[56] Uspekh fil'ma 'Aleksandr Nevskii', in: "Vecherniaia Moskva," 2 December 1938, p. 3; N. KRUZHKOV Aleksandr Nevskii, in: "Pravda," 4 December 1938, p. 4.

[57] This term was Karl Marx's – see K. MARKS Khronologicheskie vypiski, in: Arkhiv Marksa i Engel'sa. Tom 5. Moskva 1938, p. 344.

[58] Zritel' o fil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii' p. 3. See similar comments by a captain in the Red Army named Dubrovskii, reported in L. V. Na posmotre fil'ma 'Aleksandr Nevskii', in: "Vecherniaia Moskva," 29 November 1938, p. 3.

brave enough to attack our Union, we'll give them a Battle on the Ice or even worse."[59] Similar sentiments were voiced by three students named Vasil'ev, Golant and Gamynin outside of a Moscow movie theater: "'Aleksandr Nevskii' is a menacing [*groznoe*] warning to the fascist aggressors whose forefathers were so thoroughly beaten by the Russian people. If the enemy attacks, he'll be even more devastatingly rebuffed than the 'mongrel knights' were on the ice of Lake Chud."[60]

Private letters drawn from Eisenstein's archive echo the enthusiasm that resounded throughout the Soviet press. One person wrote to Eisenstein waxing rhapsodic about characters like Vas'ka Buslai and noted in regard to the film's lead that: "You have depicted the image of Aleksandr Nevskii very well. It even anticipates what was to be 700 years hence. It speaks to us in contemporary terms that 'He who comes to us with the sword will perish by the sword,' 'Where go the Russian lands,' etc."[61] Addressing Eisenstein with the ancient Slavic word for an epic folk hero – *bogatyr* – a sailor named V. Bunits wrote that: "I learned from 'Pravda' about your victory over the 'mongrel knights.' I am very glad. I send you my congratulations and my Red Army greeting from the harsh shores of the Pacific Ocean [...]."[62] Equally pleased with the underlying thematics of the epic was a teacher from Kriukovsk named V. Rogach who testified that "the Russian warriors' readiness to sacrifice themselves in the defense of their motherland evokes great love... [and] a burning hatred for the German occupiers who dared to [tread on] the Russian land." His conclusion? "We need more films which stimulate the viewer's patriotic sentiments!"[63] Seconding this view was a Russian worker from Central Asia named I. A. Sudnikov whose letter deserves to be quoted at length:

> "There are lines at the ticket windows. [...] Many have gone to the movie several times in order to watch this notable cinematic page from the history of our motherland's distant past again and again.
> This is not coincidental. Our country's best directors have created an unusually brilliant, truthful depiction [*obraz*] of the Russian people, defending their right to independence against the middle ages' mongrel knight feudal lords, relatives of the fascists of today.
> This profoundly well thought-out historical film opens up before us the pages of the history of what was and awakens within us a feeling of pride which strengthens [our resolve] to defend our independence forever.
> [...] We need such films. I, for one, as an audience member, consider it impermissible to stop with 'Aleksandr Nevskii.' It would not hurt to move toward the production of films on the subject of 'The 1812 Invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte,' 'The Sevastopol' Campaign of 1856,' 'The Battle of Kulikovo Field,' 'The Battle of the Kalka,' 'The Invasion of Batyi,' 'Tamerlane's March,' etc."[64]

Such calls were answered in surprisingly short order. 1939 saw the release of "Ruslan and Liudmila" and "Minin and Pozharskii," with "Bogdan Kmel'nitskii" and "Suvorov" follow-

[59] S. Dziubinskii Vospitatel'naia rabota na urokakh istorii SSSR, in: Vospitatel'naia rabota v nachal'noi shkole: Sbornik statei. Ed. by S. N. Belousov. Moskva 1939, pp. 100–114, here p. 102. In a Leningrad Military District study circle, a certain private Erofeev was reported for being unable to make the connection between Nevskii's defensive victory at Lake Chud and the "contemporary international situation." See "Nachal'niku polituprayleniia LVO" (29 March 1939), RGVA f. 9, op. 36s, d. 3778, l. 64.

[60] Zritel' o fil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii' p. 3.

[61] "Dorogoi tovarishch Eizenshtein! (signature illegible)" (n.d. [early 1939]), RGALI f. 1923, op. 1, d. 2289, ll. 55–36, here l. 36.

[62] "Uv. Sergei Mikhailovich (from Bunits)" (20 November 1938), ibidem l. 24.

[63] Zritel' o fil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii' p. 3.

[64] "O kinofil'me 'Aleksandr Nevskii' (by I. A. Sudnikov)" (30 December 1938), RGALI f. 1923, op. 1, d. 2289, ll. 32–32ob. Similar themes were suggested by Iu. V. Ivanov and other letter writers in early 1939 – see ll. 65–66ob, 102, etc.

ing two years later.[65] Red Army Lieutenant A. I. Matveev found "Ruslan and Liudmila" memorable enough to mention in his diary at the Finnish front. His contemporary, a graduate student named A. G. Man'kov, reported liking V. Pudovkin's "Minin and Pozharskii" in his diary somewhat earlier that year, while Iurii Baranov, a schoolboy, applauded the same director's "Suvorov" in 1941. Baranov's description of "Chkalov" several weeks later – a film which could have cast the heroic pilot according to the orthodox Soviet aesthetics of Socialist Realism – reveals that it too relied on national folkloric tropes popularized in "Nevskii":

> "From the first frame it was possible to sense a certain uniqueness to the film – finally it became clear: in the picture Chkalov was cast as an Old Russian epic folk hero [*bogatyr*]. The picture was filled with that fairy-tale romanticism. [...] The tone was convincing and the picture unforced. I liked it."[66]

Complementing other sorts of official rhetoric in circulation in the mid-to-late 1930s, the "Nevskii" genre of patriotic historical cinema captured the public's imagination. Maya Turovskaya probably only slightly overstates the case when she asserts that the film's "costumed fairy tale heroes" Vas'ka Buslai and Gavrilo Oleksich even replaced Chapaev late in the decade at the center of children's playground games![67] Even such unlikely heroes as Ivan the Terrible proved to be viable candidates for Stalinist canonization. If intellectuals like B. L. Pasternak regarded such developments with skepticism,[68] many others reacted less critically, as demonstrated in the diary entry of a metal worker from the city of Molotov (now Perm'), G. F. Semenov:

> "I am [presently] reading "Ivan Fedorov."[69] It's true that there were many noteworthy people in Old Rus'. Ivan IV's struggle with the boyars is well-done. As a Soviet individual, it seemed odd to me: why would a tsar suddenly clash with his boyars? What for? So that Rus' might be truly great, it turns out."[70]

Present on the stage, on the screen and on classroom and library shelves, the new ideological line's use of familiar Russian myths and traditions found considerable resonance in Soviet society.

[65] See "Ruslan i Liudmila" (I. Nikitchenko and V. Nevezhin, 1939), "Minin i Pozharskii" (Vs. Pudovkin, 1939), "Bogdan Khmel'nitskii" (I. Savchenko, 1941) and "Suvorov" (Vs. Pudovkin and M. Doller, 1941).

[66] A. I. Matveev's diary, stored at RGVA under f. 34980, op. 14, d. 84, is excerpted in Prodolzhaem prodvigat'sia v glub' Bezuiutnoi Strany, in: Istochnik (1993) No. 3, pp. 29–45, here p. 43; MAN'KOV Iz dnevnika, 1938–1941 gg. p. 181; IURII BARANOV Goluboi razliv: Dnevniki, pis'ma, stikhotvoreniia, 1936–1942. Iaroslavl' 1988, pp. 83, 109.

[67] TUROVSKAYA The Tastes of Soviet Moviegoers p. 103. For persuasive analysis artistic productions' shaping of popular memory, see ANTON KAES From Hitler to Heimat: the Return of History as Film. Cambridge, MA, London 1989, pp. 196, 198. The author is grateful to Katia Dianina for this reference.

[68] Pasternak wrote to O. M. Freidenberg on February 4, 1941 that "It must seem to Our Protector [Stalin] that up until now [things] have been too sentimental and that it is time to sober-up [*odumat'sia*]. Peter the First has turned out to be an inadequate parallel. The new infatuation, openly professed to, is Ivan the Terrible, the *oprichnina* and iron will [*zhestokost'*]. New operas, plays and film screenplays are being written – I kid you not." Excerpts of the letter are published in B. M. BORISOV, E. B. PASTERNAK Materialy k tvorcheskoi istorii romana B. Pasternaka 'Doktor Zhivago,' in: Novyi mir (1988) No. 6, pp. 203–248, here p. 218. Indeed, prominent Soviet cultural agents like Tolstoi and Eisenstein had been recruited to expand the campaign within years of its launching in 1937 – see KEVIN PLATT, DAVID BRANDENBERGER Terribly Romantic, Terribly Progressive or Terribly Tragic: Rehabilitating Ivan IV Under I. V. Stalin, in: Russian Review 58 (1999) No. 4, pp. 635–654.

[69] I. BAS Ivan Fedorov. Moskva 1940.

[70] Diary entry from June 7, 1941, in: GENNADII SEMENOV I stal nam polem boia tsekh: Dnevnik frontovoi brigady. Perm' 1990, p. 21.

Not only Soviet citizens found the new line compelling. Émigrés otherwise opposed to Stalin including G. P. Fedotov and N. A. Berdiaev grudgingly acknowledged the success of the campaign to selectively rehabilitate the tsarist ethos and heroic past. Arguing in 1937 that Soviet patriotism "is simply Russian patriotism," Berdiaev conceded that the Stalin regime was having unprecedented success in mobilizing genuinely popular support by deft use of ideological appeals. N. Timasheff similarly tipped his hat to the ideological pragmatism in his seminal postwar study.[71] "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik" commentator Vera Aleksandrova offered perhaps the most sophisticated analysis of the official line's on-going evolution, noting that:

> "*Props* [*rekvizity*] *of the historic past* – the people, ethnicity [*narodnost'*], the motherland, the nation [*natsiia*], and patriotism – play a large role in the new ideology.
> The most characteristic aspect of the newly-forming ideology[...] is *the downgrading* [*ottesnenie*] *of socialist elements within it.* This doesn't mean that socialist phraseology has disappeared or is disappearing. Not at all. The majority of all slogans still contain this socialist element, but it no longer carries its previous ideological weight, the socialist element having ceased to play a *dynamic role* in new slogans. It is most possible to see these subtle moves in minor but representative examples. At first, one was to speak of the USSR as the 'country of the proletarian dictatorship,' and then the 'motherland of socialism' and the 'motherland of toilers of the whole world.' During the 'socialism in one country' construction period, the USSR was referred to officially as the 'socialist fatherland.' Toward the end of the First Five-Year Plan, the more intimate [term] 'socialist motherland,' or 'soviet motherland' appeared, while today [the USSR] is referred to over and over [*splosh' i riadom*] as simply '*our motherland.*' According to our contemporaries' perceptions, 'our motherland' sounds warmer and more joyful, less official and bureaucratic [*kazenno*], than 'socialist motherland'."[72]

The persuasive appeal of the depoliticized "motherland" sloganeering that Aleksandrova identified is confirmed by a collection of several hundred letters between Red Army soldiers and their families from the 1939–40 Soviet-Finnish war. Almost completely disengaged from Marxist-Leninist and internationalist themes, the term "motherland" repeatedly appears as something denoting a geographic locale. One Red Army commander stationed in Omsk announced to his brother: "Mitia, if the samurais[73] steal into our dear and beloved motherland, then, brother, I myself will hit them dead on [*bit' na otlichno*] for me and you – you have my Komsomol word on it." Others sent a friend in a different unit the semi-literate note: "Greetings from the patriots of the motherland! [...] We've gotten together [here] to drink to victory!" For some, "motherland" was even conflated with a specifically Russian ethnocultural identity. V. Zenzinov noticed this nativist sentiment during an interview with a Soviet prisoner-of-war in a Finnish internment camp when the latter frankly remarked: "Surely you don't think we would have fought this hard if the Finns had attacked us in Ukraine?"[74] Such sentiments had been promoted by the Red Army's political directorate to improve morale within the ranks, a strategy that L. Z. Mekhlis linked to significant improve-

[71] See NICOLAS BERDYAEV The Origins of Russian Communism. Translated by R. M. French. London 1937, pp. 171–77. Berdiaev in some ways was echoing a statement made during the previous year by G. P. Fedotov, reprinted in his Sud'ba i grekhi Rossii: izbrannye stat'i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul'tury. Tom 1. S.-Peterburg 1992, p. 124; see also TIMASHEFF The Great Retreat.

[72] V. ALEKSANDROVA Ideologicheskie metamorfozy, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 27 April 1937, p. 14. K. F. Shteppa makes a similar point about the shift from Soviet patriotism to "Russian great power nationalism" in his memoirs – see SHTEPPA Russian Historians pp. 136, 134.

[73] "Samurais" was a derogatory Soviet term for the Imperial Japanese Army during the 1930s.

[74] V. ZENZINOV Vstrecha s Rossiei: Kak i chem zhivut v Sovetskom Soiuze – pis'ma v Krasnuiu armiiu, 1939–1940. New York 1944, pp. 340, 405, 138. The 277 letters and other documents in this collection apparently were taken as trophies from the Soviet dead.

ments in battlefield performance and discipline during a speech to the High Command in the spring of 1940.[75]

Even before the Finnish war, a "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik" correspondent reasoned that "the motherland cult, instilled from above and inseparably connected with the cult of the all-powerful great leader, the 'father of the peoples,' answers the needs of the society's new elites." He elaborated that the campaign was not only aimed at the geographically-bounded Soviet polity, but also at "the national distinctiveness of the peoples who inhabit it, especially the Great Russian tribe which founded the Russian state. [...]" If early Bolshevik mythology had celebrated rebels from the Chartists and Paris Communards to Razin and Pugachev, "now the search for historical forefathers has brought about the exaltation of Saint Vladimir, Dmitrii Donskoi, Aleksandr Nevskii, Ivan Kalita, and Peter the Great – royal builders and organizers of the Russian state and, later, the Russian empire [...] now [Stalin] wants to trace his political lineage from Vladimir Monomakh, Aleksandr Nevskii, and Peter the Great."[76]

Domestic Soviet accounts echoed the émigrés' suspicions that the changes under way were not just a selective revival of a few names from the distant past. V. I. Vernadskii, a biochemist and geologist (and the father of the émigré Russian historian George Vernadsky), recounted on the pages of his diary in November 1938 that "last night Pasha and I were at an exhibit on the 'Tale of Igor's Host.' It was not only a strident demonstration of a heightened sense of national pride, but of the people's cultural upbringing in a spirit of national patriotism."[77] Such impressions were not just restricted to members of the intelligentsia, something made clear by a diary entry of an eighteen year-old schoolgirl named Nina Kosterina in 1939:

> "Last night, as I walked home from seeing an exhibit [of Russian historical painting at the Tret'iakov Gallery] through the center of the city, along Red Square, past the Kremlin, past the old spot where executions took place, past St. Basil's Cathedral, I suddenly felt again a sort of deep kinship with the paintings at the exhibit. I am Russian [*Ia – russkaia*]. At first this frightened me – were these, perhaps, chauvinistic stirrings within me? No, chauvinism is foreign to me, but at the same time, I am Russian. As I looked at Antokol'skii's magnificent sculptures of Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible, I was swept with pride: these people were Russians. And Repin's 'The Zaporozhian Cossacks'?! And Kotzebue's 'The Russians in the Alps'?! And Aivazovskii's 'The Battle of Chesme,' Surikov's 'The Boiarynia Morozova,' and 'The Morning of the Streltsys' Execution' – this is Russian history, the history of my forefathers."[78]

Vernadskii's and Kosterina's diaries suggest that the implications of the gradual valorization of Russian heroes and imagery were abundantly clear to Soviet citizens even before the official line matured fully on the eve of war.[79] L. V. Shaporina confirms this impression in a diary entry from 1939 written as she was musing over the changing repertoire at her Leningrad Puppet Theater:

[75] See my 'Lozhnye ustanovki v dele vospitaniia i propagandy:' doklad nachal'nika Glavnogo politicheskogo upravleniia RKKA L. Z. Mekhisa o voennoi ideologii, 1940 g., in: Istoricheskii arkhiv (1997) No. 5–6, pp. 82–99, here p. 90.

[76] I. GARVI Patriotizm i diktatura, in: "Sotsialisticheskii vestnik," 14 June 1938, pp. 2–4, here pp. 2–3.

[77] Diary entry from November 17, 1938. V. I. VERNADSKII Dnevnik 1938 goda, in: Druzhba narodov (1991) No. 3, pp. 243–268, here p. 263.

[78] Diary entry from December 10, 1939. Dnevnik Niny Kosterinoi, in: Novyi mir (1962) No. 12, pp. 31–105, here p. 84. Ideological instructors found Ivan IV to represent the prototypical Muscovite ruler among second-year soldiers and junior officers enrolled in Red Army political education courses. When asked about Ivan Kalita, the Muscovite prince who had begun the expansion of the principality's domains, one Red Army soldier bluffed that "he was a great military commander under Ivan the Terrible." See "Nachal'niku politupravleniia RKKA Armeiskomu komissaru 1-go ranga Mekhlis, 'Donesenie o proverke politicheskikh zaniatii...'" (1 May 1939), RGVA f. 9, op. 36s, d. 3778, l. 44.

[79] BRANDENBERGER, DUBROVSKY 'The People Need a Tsar:' the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology p. 882.

> "What should we be doing? All I know for sure is that in the theater we ought to be concentrating only on things Russian. Russian history, the Russian epic, [the Russian] song. To inculcate [*vnedriat'*] it in the schools. To familiarize children with this, the only wealth that is left to them."[80]

Perhaps most amazing is the extent to which highly educated members of Soviet society bought into the new historical line. M. M. Litvinov demonstrated his acceptance of the official line while ranting to a friend in 1939 about the "lawlessness and repressions of foreign bandits and our own national isolationists who suppressed the Russian people and their talents for hundreds and thousands of years."[81] A year later, Vs. Vishnevskii sat down in an agitated state to write in his diary about his fears regarding the coming war:

> "Russia and the USSR are going to have to fight to the death – this is not a European joke any more. [But] we are Russians, God damn it. We have beaten the Germans and Tatars and French and Brits [*Britov*] and many others besides – we'd sooner die because it's not worth it to live otherwise. But we'll be fighting for ourselves, for the eternal 180 million-strong Russian people. It's fine if the Ukrainians fight along-side us – they're sturdy fellows... about the others, I can't say for sure. [...] [W]e're going to fight. [...] We are an enormous and mighty nation and we do not want to be subordinate [to anyone]. I know the West – I saw it. It sits like a damned splinter in the soul: I saw their whole civilization, all their delights and temptations... [E]xchange what is nationally and historically ours for the European standard? No way, not ever."

Apparently troubled by his own chauvinism, Vishnevskii subsequently crossed out of his diary the patronizing passage above that concerns the Ukrainians and the other non-Russian Soviet peoples. Nevertheless, a militant sense of national pride and a tendency to conflate the Russian ethnic experience with the Soviets' need for vigilance is very visible throughout the rest of the paragraph.[82] Although only rarely expressed in such aggressive terms, the diaries of M. M. Prishvin and Vishnevskii are littered with statements testifying to the distinctiveness of the Russian ethnicity during the mid-to-late 1930s.[83]

In fact, the accounts of Vernadskii, Kosterina, Shaporina, Litvinov, Prishvin and Vishnevskii suggest something important about Soviet society's reception of the official line: few seem to have understood that the regime's propagandists were stressing Soviet state-building (expressed through russocentric motifs) and not explicit Russian nationalism.[84] Perhaps overlooking the now routine internationalist propaganda (which was still ubiquitous in the late 1930s), these observers were struck – consciously or unconsciously – by the state's co-option of Russian heroes, myths and imagery from the tsarist era and seem to have concluded that the new ideological current was on the verge of endorsing explicit Russian chauvinism. Blium's misgivings about the official line best illustrate this miscommunication:

> "Socialist patriotism sometimes and in some places is starting to display all the characteristics of racial nationalism [...] [p]eople of the new generations who have grown up in the context of Soviet culture without seeing the bourgeois patriotism of the Guchkovs, Stolypins and Miliukovs simply do not differentiate the two types of patriotism. In the hunt for 'our' heroes

[80] Rendering based on that found in Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s, p. 373. The author is grateful to Thomas Lahusen for his furnishing of the passage in its original Russian.

[81] Litvinov's outburst is recorded in the June 22, 1939 entry of SOLOV'EV Tetradi krasnogo professora (1912–1941 gg.) p. 203.

[82] Diary entry from May 18, 1940. "Dnevnik Vishnevskogo Vs. V.," RGALI f. 1038, op. 1, d. 2077, ll. 64–65. Vishnevskii regularly conflated Russian and Soviet identities – see ibidem ll. 37, 47, 69; d. 2079, ll. 31, 32, 37, etc.

[83] PRISHVIN Dnevniki, 1905–1954, pp. 322, 334–335, 360–361, 364, 381, 386, 390, etc.; "Dnevnik Vishnevskogo Vs. V.," RGALI f. 1038, op. 1, d. 2075, ll. 17, 37, 45; d. 2077, ll. 47, 97; d. 2079, l. 12.

[84] Soviet ideology was not nationalistic, but instead aimed for the attainment of superpower status through admittedly populist appeals. Nationalism, according to its principle theorist, is "a theory of political legitimacy" and neither Russian self-rule nor some form of limited sovereignty were ever on the party hierarchy's agenda. See ERNEST GELLNER Nations and Nationalism. Ithaca, London 1983, p. 1.

> of the distant ages and the hasty search for historical 'analogies' (that is, in art, specifically in the theater), publishing houses and the All-Union Committee for Artistic Affairs are placing stakes on any anti-Polish[85] and anti-German[86] material, and authors are throwing themselves into the [task of] fulfilling of this 'social commission' [*sotsial'nyi zakaz*]."[87]

After criticizing unnamed Soviet authors that he termed "German, Polish and Japanese-eating cannibal-crusaders [*'nemtseedy,' 'poliakoedy,' 'iaponoedy' rytsari*]" for promoting "a simplistic, pseudo-socialist *racism*," Blium bemoaned the fact that the authors "don't understand that to beat the enemy fascist, we must under no circumstances use his weapon (racism), but a far superior weapon – internationalist socialism." Called upon to investigate the letter, an Agitprop consultant named V. Stepanov concluded that Blium's complaints were hyperbolic and one-sided and noted that he had failed to recognize the progressive aspects of the historical personalities being rehabilitated. Apparently contacted by Agitprop, Blium proved unwilling to acknowledge that the Soviet "search for a usable past"[88] might ever legitimately promote Russian state-builders from the tsarist era as "progressive."[89]

Judging by the tenor of Soviet propaganda between 1939 and 1941,[90] it is clear that the party hierarchy dismissed the concerns of people like Blium with little more than perfunctory attention.[91] Unconcerned with the dissonance between their ideological production on high and its consumption at the ground level, Stalin, Zhdanov and others may not have even grasped the dimensions of the miscommunication. To frame the paradox in the idiom of the day, if the hierarchy was styling the official line as "national in form, socialist in content" and constructing it as "national in form, *etatist* in content," many in society understood it to be "national in form, *nationalist* in content" because of the party's demonstrative trafficking in Russian heroes, myths and icons. Ultimately, the issue was an insignificant one, as many

[85] Blium apparently knew that S. M. Gorodetskii's anti-Polish "Ivan Susanin" would open in Moscow during the following month. As anticipated, the play caught the imagination of Soviets including Perm' metal worker G. F. Semenov – see his May 15, 1941 entry in: I stal nam polem boia tsekh p. 17.

[86] I.e., S. M. Eisenstein's 1938 film "Aleksandr Nevskii".

[87] "Glubokouvazhaemyi Iosif Vissarionovich! (from Blium)" (31 January 1939), RTsKhIDNI f. 17, op. 120, d. 348, ll. 63–64. In a different letter to Stalin, N. K. Krupskaia expressed similar sentiments in reference to the infamous 1938 Russian language decree: "I am very troubled by *how* we are going to carry out this [union-wide Russian language instruction]. It seems sometimes that the small horns of Great Power chauvinism are starting to show." See "Dorogoi Iosif Vissarionovich" (7 March 1938), published in K 120 letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia N. K. Krupskoi, in: Izvestiia TsK (1989) No. 3, pp. 171–180, here p. 179.

[88] This expression originated with a famous 1965 essay reprinted in HENRY STEELE COMMAGER The Search for a Usable Past and Other Essays in Historiography. New York 1967, pp. 3–27.

[89] RTsKhIDNI f. 17, op. 120, d. 348, l. 65; "Sekretariu TsK VKP(b) tovarishchu A. A. Zhdanovu (from Stepanov)" (16 February 1939), ibidem ll. 76–77.

[90] On the continuation of official russocentric statism between 1939 and 1941, see EWA THOMPSON Soviet Russian Writers and the Soviet Invasion of Poland in September 1939, in: The Search for Self-Definition in Russian Literature. Ed. by Ewa Thompson. Houston 1991, pp. 158–66; SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion pp. 196–98; Although Soviet ideological principles did not fundamentally change after August 1939, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty did require a brief reverse in the anti-German aspect of the official line. This caused predictable confusion within society. D., for instance, a chemical engineer in Leningrad, questioned aloud: "How will our historians feel now? After all, they've been shouting about the mongrel-knights, about the Battle on the Ice, about Aleksandr Nevskii, etc., and now they're going to have to shout about a century, even several centuries, of friendship." "Spetssoobshchenie ob otklikakh na zakliuchenie sovetsko-germanskogo dogovora o nenapadenii" (August 1939), Arkhiv UFSBg.SPbLO, reprinted in: Mezhdunarodnoe polozhenie glazami leningradtsev, 1941–1945 (iz Arkhiva Upravleniia Federal'noi Sluzhby Bezopasnosti po g. Sankt-Peterburgu i Leningradskoi oblasti). S.-Peterburg 1996, p. 10.

[91] Instead, in an unpublished Central Committee resolution, the party hierarchy scolded *literatory* and other contributors to official "thick journals" for their reluctance to join the patriotic campaign – see O nekotorykh literaturno-khudozhestvennykh zhurnalakh, in: Bol'shevik (1939) No. 17, pp. 51–57.

pragmatists (from Stepanov to Berdiaev) seem to have felt that the difference between Soviet patriotism and russocentrism was largely semantic. More important was that the new line was exhibiting considerable mobilizational success, something which would discourage any temptation to return to more internationalist positions. Metal worker Semenov perhaps best epitomized the phenomenon in his May 26, 1941 diary entry:

> "I am presently reading 'Dmitrii Donskoi.'[92] It's a good read. I read Vera Inber's 'Ovidii,' which I liked. But just the same, I was more moved by 'Dmitrii Donskoi.' In tense times like these, it's as if one hears the voice of one's distant forefathers."[93]

Semenov's sentiments were echoed in the diary of a Leningrad worker named Georgii Kulagin, who realized that the staging of plays like "Suvorov," "Kutuzov" and "Admiral Nakhimov" was part of an upswell of patriotic propaganda early that year.[94]

The outbreak of hostilities with Germany spurred forward many of the russocentric and statist themes already maturing in the official line on the eve of war. V. M. Molotov, for instance, compared the Nazi invasion to that of Napoleon's in 1812 in his famous June 22, 1941 address. Familiar with such rhetoric after several years of similar historical propaganda, ordinary Soviet citizens responded positively.[95] Not unusual was the statement of Rumiantseva, an executive at the Tel'man factory in Moscow, that: "No one will ever defeat our people. We know from history that the Russians have always emerged as the victors, although in those days there were rich and poor in Russia, while now, because all our people are equal, a political union of the people has come about. This is a people that no one can defeat."[96]

Wartime appeals to Soviet patriotism tended to favor Russian-oriented themes, the Russian people's prominent prewar position in the multiethnic Soviet family changing little during the first months of the war and ultimately finding endorsement in Stalin's November 7th Red Square speech.[97] Declaring that "you must draw inspiration from the valiant example of our great ancestors," Stalin pointed to a number of exclusively Russian pre-revolutionary heroes who were to define patriotic conduct during the war: Aleksandr Nevskii, Dmitrii Donskoi, Kuz'ma Minin, Dmitrii Pozharskii, Aleksandr Suvorov, and Mikhail Kutuzov.[98] The popular

[92] A. MERZON Dmitrii Donskoi. Moskva 1940; or S. BORODIN Dmitrii Donskoi. Moskva 1941.

[93] SEMENOV I stal nam polem boia tsekh p. 18. Semenov missed the announcement of the start of the war on June 22, 1941 because he was out walking in the woods. Obviously still mulling over what he had been reading, he mentions in his diary that the fir trees reminded him of "sharp-tipped helmets of the Old Russian epic heroes,.... as if Dmitrii Donskoi's clan was marching against Mamai's horde," ibidem p. 22.

[94] GEORGII KULAGIN Dnevnik i pamiat'. Leningrad 1978, p. 25.

[95] Vystuplenie po radio Zam. Predsedatelia Soveta narodnykh komissarov SSSR i Narodnogo komissara inostrannykh del tov. V. M. Molotova, in: "Pravda," 23 June 1941, 1. Kulagin noted one of his friends' comment on the shop floor that "Molotov's mentioning of Napoleon's invasion means it's serious, comrades." See his Dnevnik i pamiat' p. 17. See also the June 22, 1941 diary entries in BARANOV Goluboi razliv: dnevniki, pis'ma, stikhotvoreniia p. 117; and V. I. VERNADSKII "Korennye izmeneniia neizbezhny...": Dnevnik 1941 goda, in: Novyi mir (1995) No. 5, pp. 176–221, here p. 200.

[96] "Dokladnaia zapiska nachal'nika UNKVD g. Moskvy i Moskovskoi oblasti M. I. Zhuravleva Narkomu vnutrennikh del SSSR L. P. Beriia o reagirovanii naseleniia na razgrom gitlerovskikh voisk pod Moskvoi" (30 December 1941), TsA FSB RF, reprinted in Moskva voennaia, 1941–1945: memuary i arkhivnye dokumenty. Moskva 1995, p. 206.

[97] SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion p. 206, etc.; MEHNERT Weltrevolution durch Weltgeschichte pp. 70–74.

[98] Rech' Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo komiteta oborony i Narodnogo komissara oborony tov. I. V. Stalina, in: "Pravda," 8 November 1941, p. 1. A day earlier, Stalin had provided a different list of heroes while detailing the German leadership's intentions to lead a savage war: "These people, without conscience and honor, [these] people, with the morals of animals, have the audacity to call for the extermination of the great Russian nation, the nation of Plekhanov and Lenin, Belinskii and Chernyshevskii, Pushkin and Tolstoi, Glinka and Tchaikovsky, Gor'kii and Chekhov, Sechenov and Pavlov, Repin and Surikov, Suvorov and Kutuzov!" Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo komiteta oborony tovari-

reaction was enthusiastic, underscoring the success of prewar investments in historical agitation – as a professor at Leningrad State University noted, "[...] the people will owe much to Comrade Stalin for victory. In his speech, Stalin was able to find precisely those words that awaken hope and stimulate a Russian's best feelings, his love for the Motherland, and, what is especially important, connect us with Russia's past." Another professor added: "[...] in Stalin's speech there is a stunning understanding of the spirit of the Russian people, a sense and knowledge of their history." Meanwhile, P. S. Barkov of the Moscow Svarz plant noted simply that "Com[rade] Stalin reminded us of the names of the great Russian military commanders. They sounded like a rallying call, a battle cry for the annihilation of the occupiers."[99]

If Stephen Kotkin is right in arguing that "the promotion of Great Russian nationalism [in the 1930s is best] appreciated as, on the one hand, part of the groping for an understanding of what constituted socialism and, on the other hand, as indicative of a strategic shift from the task of building socialism to that of defending socialism,"[100] such subtleties were often lost on Soviet citizens of the era. True, the early Soviet historical-revolutionary narrative was popularized after 1934 in order to have wider appeal, something which was accomplished through the interpolation of traditional Russian heroes, myths and symbols into a reproblematized Marxist narrative framework in which representatives of the pre-revolutionary Russian order would stand alongside more orthodox elements of the Marxist historical dialectic.[101] However, this article indicates that Soviet citizens often understood the line to endorse Russian nationalism, if not full-blown chauvinism. I have demonstrated that although individuals ranging from schoolchildren and Red Army soldiers to workers, scholars and even émigrés often found the new discourse appealing and even persuasive, they did so oftentimes on their own terms.[102] If a general sense of patriotism was widespread, it may have been founded at times on the misunderstanding that the era's official etatist message was actually nationalist in essence.

Despite such miscommunication, it is clear that the new line was compelling in terms that the party hierarchy did not find objectionable. In this sense, the party's sentimental nativism functioned as a pragmatic *modus vivendi* with Soviet society on the eve of war – an ideological "Big Deal"[103] of sorts. As with most pragmatic endeavors, however, there were inelegant aspects of the compromise, as those "speaking Bolshevik"[104] in the late 1930s gave a new voice to russocentric and chauvinist sentiments in society that had lacked articulation during the first two decades of Soviet power.

shcha I. V. Stalina, ibidem 7 November 1941, pp. 1–2, here p. 2.

[99] "Spetssoobshchenie" (13 November 1941), Arkhiv UFSBg.SPbLO, reprinted in: Mezhdunarodnoe polozhenie glazami leningradtsev pp. 19–20; "Iz zapisi besedy s rabotnikom zavoda Svarz P. S. Barkovym" (September 1942), Nauchnyi arkhiv Instituta rossiiskoi istorii Akademii Nauk, f. 2, razd. X, op. 1, d. 1, l. 54, reprinted in Moskva voennaia p. 153.

[100] KOTKIN Magnetic Mountain p. 357.

[101] BRANDENBERGER, DUBROVSKY 'The People Need a Tsar': the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology pp. 873–892; SIMON Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion p. 172–173.

[102] A double-edged sword, the line could alienate as well as motivate. During the war, L. N. Seifullina complained about the russocentrism to Ilya Ehrenburg, noting that "my father was a russified Tatar, my mother was Russian, and I have always considered myself to be Russian, but when I hear such things, I feel like saying that I am a Tatar." See IL'IA ERENBURG Liudi, gody, zhizn': vospominaniia v trekh knigakh. Tom 2. Moskva 1990, p. 257.

[103] See DUNHAM In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction pp. 4–5, 66. Dunham explicitly concerns herself with postwar Stalinist society, but suspects that the party's revision of its social contract to promote mass mobilization had begun in the 1930s.

[104] KOTKIN Magnetic Mountain chapter 5.