

# National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956 (Russian Research Center

## **Studies**)

David Brandenberger



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During the 1930s, Stalin and his entourage rehabilitated famous names from the Russian national past in a propaganda campaign designed to mobilize Soviet society for the coming war. Legendary heroes like Aleksandr Nevskii and epic events like the Battle of Borodino quickly eclipsed more conventional communist slogans revolving around class struggle and proletarian internationalism. In a provocative study, David Brandenberger traces this populist "national Bolshevism" into the 1950s, highlighting the catalytic effect that it had on Russian national identity formation.

Beginning with national Bolshevism's origins within Stalin's inner circle, Brandenberger next examines its projection into Soviet society through education and mass culture--from textbooks and belletristic literature to theater, opera, film, and the arts. Brandenberger then turns to the popular reception of this propaganda, uncovering glimpses of Stalin-era public opinion in letters, diaries, and secret police reports.

Controversial insofar as Soviet social identity is commonly associated with propaganda promoting class consciousness, this study argues that Stalinist ideology was actually more Russian nationalist than it was proletarian internationalist. *National Bolshevism* helps to explain not only why this genre of populism survived Stalin's death in 1953, but why it continues to resonate among Russians today.

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