



'Our Glorious Past': Lukashenka's Belarus and the Great Patriotic War (Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society)

David R. Marples

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This timely book examines how the regime of President Aliaksandr Lukashenka has used the 'Great Patriotic War' (1941-45) as a key element in state and identity formation in Belarus. The campaign was discernible from 2003 and intensified after a rift with Russia that led to a re-examination of the earlier policy of close political and economic partnership. David R. Marples focuses in particular on the years 2009 and 2010, which commemorated two 65th anniversaries: the liberation of Minsk (3 July 1944) and the end of World War II in Europe (9 May 1945). Using a variety of sources, this unique book critically examines the official interpretations of the war from various angles: the initial invasion, occupation, the Partisans, historic sites and monuments, films, documentaries, museums, schools, and public occasions commemorating some of the major events. Relying on first-hand research, including books recommended by the Ministry of Education, state-controlled media and personal visits to the major historic sites and monuments of Belarus, Marples explains and measures the effectiveness of Lukashenka's program. In outlining the main tenets of the state interpretation of the war years, the book highlights the distortions and manipulations of historical evidence as well as the dismissal of alternative versions as 'historical revisionism.' It assesses the successes and weaknesses of the campaign as well as its long term effects and prospects.

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