

Filmmakers Worried About State's Hand

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Demidov in 2006, when he led United Russia's youth wing **Maxim Stulov**

New Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky named United Russia's former chief ideologue as his deputy in charge of cinematography, sparking worries that he is adopting a propagandistic approach to film production, news reports said Monday.

Ivan Demidov, who has overseen national religious and public issues since 2010 as the deputy head of the Kremlin's domestic policy department, would be Medinsky's first appointee.

The culture minister is expected to officially announce the appointment this week, Interfax reported, citing a ministry source.

Demidov worked in television in the 1990s, including as host of a music show, where he wore trademark black glasses. But he has no known experience in the film industry.

"This is a complete puzzle to me. I know that he hosted a TV show, but I don't know what he has done for cinema," said film director Andrei Kavun, whose credits include the 2010

blockbuster "Kandagar," about Russian pilots who fled Taliban captivity in Afghanistan.

He was echoed by director Pavel Bardin, best known for "Russia 88," a 2009 mockumentary about the rise of the neo-Nazi movement in the country.

"State personnel decisions are showing once more that cinema is not an art but a propaganda tool," Bardin said.

He added that he does not expect anything positive from the ministry's new administration.

Demidov was not available for comment Monday, but Medinsky has indicated in the past that he favors patriotic films such as director Nikita Mikhalkov's ill-received "Burnt by the Sun 2."

"With state support, this film needs to be promoted to a foreign audience, especially in countries neighboring Russia," Medinsky said after the film's 2010 premiere.

Kavun, however, questioned the notion of state-sponsored patriotic films.

"Today we are facing an escalation of state patriotism that has nothing to do with the real thing," he said.

Demidov has experience in promoting patriotism. He led United Russia's youth wing in the mid-2000s before being appointed as the party's chief ideologue in 2008.

He also is known to be close to the Russian Orthodox Church and was among the founders of a church-centered cable television channel in 2005.

Both he and Medinsky were members of a presidential commission against the falsification of Russian history.

Medinsky, who was named culture minister May 21, served as head of the State Duma's Culture Committee but has few ties to the artistic community.

Instead, he has written a series of patriotic books and engaged in other activities that have stirred up fears that he will turn the Culture Ministry into a propaganda ministry.

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