



A War of Images: Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity, 1812- 1945

Stephen M. Norris

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The *lubok*—a broadside or poster—played an important role in Russia’s cultural history. Evolving as a medium for communication with a largely illiterate population, the popular prints were adapted to express political propaganda. Stephen Norris examines the use of such prints to stir patriotic fervor during times of war, from Napoleon’s failed attempt at conquering Russia to Hitler’s invasion.

Norris shows how visual images of patriotism and expressions of the Russian spirit changed over time, yet remained similar. The *lubok* produced during Russia’s modern wars consistently featured the same key elements: the Russian peasant, the Cossack, and a representation of “the Russian spirit.” When Russia was victorious, occasionally the tsar figured into the imagery; but by the beginning of the 20th century, ethnic identity had replaced dynastic representations of Russian nationhood. After the Revolutions of 1917, Bolshevik and Soviet leaders appropriated the traditional elements of the wartime *lubok* to promote their vision of the new socialist state.

The political power of *lubok* imagery did not end with the Bolsheviks’ adaptations. During World War II, political posters similar to those of the tsarist era reemerged to express and to reinforce Russia’s culture of patriotism and strength.

Amplly illustrated, *A War of Images* is the first comprehensive study of how popular prints helped to construct national identity in Russia over a period of more than a century. Readers interested in Russian art, history, and culture will find its insights intriguing.

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