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## Russia against Napoleon: The True Story of the Campaigns of War and Peace

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military, and strategic confluence that led to the Spanish-American War. The question for the polity is how to design a system that marginalizes these personal agendas and ideologies to ensure that questions of war are indeed answered with morality, proper state behavior, and national self-interest as the foremost considerations. Books like *The War Lovers* are instructive in ensuring we are not doomed to repeat history, or at least that we can recognize it when we are.

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The Napoleonic Wars are not exceptions to the rule that the victor of war writes the history. Yet there is a strange omission: the mythic history of Napoleon and Russia has been produced almost wholly by the British and Germans and focuses on the events of 1813 and 1814. Yes, the disastrous French campaign in Russia is viewed as the beginning of the end and treated as Napoleon's mistake, but if the Russians are offhandedly thanked for the war of attrition they fought in 1812, their participation in Western Europe in 1813 and 1814 has been downplayed. This is despite the startling fact that 650,000 Russians operated in the West in those years and in fact trooped into Paris in March 1814.

Even historians of Russia have not made much of the role the Russians played in 1813–14. They could not do

so, of course, given the lack of archival access. But one must also consider the impact of the myth of 1812, promulgated in *War and Peace* and later reinforced by the “populism” of the Russian Revolution. Tolstoy's myth emphasizes weather, great distances, Napoleon's overconfidence, and especially the heroism of the long-suffering Russian people, who overcame not only the French but the incompetence of the tsar and his advisers and generals. All this resonated well with the subsequent need of nineteenth-century revolutionaries and Soviets to downplay the successes of the old regime.

Dominic Lieven's *Russia against Napoleon* corrects the existing omission by bringing to light Russia's preparation for and the execution of its involvement in the diplomatic, political, and military struggle against Napoleon from the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 until 1814. If Lieven is to be congratulated for being the first to use Russian sources, available only since 1990, he deserves greater praise for resisting the urge to make his story part of the eventual fall of the tsarist regime. One could really not ask for more in the way of a military history. It is exhaustively thorough, cognizant of the relationships of intelligence, diplomacy, and domestic politics to war, and properly limited in scope and conclusions.

Lieven convincingly demonstrates the real accomplishments in terms of strategy and execution of war of Alexander I, his foreign-policy advisers, Count Nesselrode's Paris intelligence apparatus, and military officers. His greater achievement, however, is his focus on logistics and—what might seem to be a minor matter—the role of the horse. These are perhaps the largest and most

interesting aspects of the Russian success story. If in 1807 the Russian state and army were inarguably “Old Regime” compared to the West, by 1814 the Russian ability to project military power beyond the country’s borders was formidable. This project depended, most of all, on the ability to move and feed men.

To some, the role of “horsepower” in early modern war will seem a revelation, even though the fact that Napoleon could replace men but not the horses in Russia in 1812 is already well-known. Lieven tells us that the

horse was the most significant military asset of its time: “The horse fulfilled the present-day functions of the tank, the lorry, the aeroplane and motorized artillery. It was in other words the weapon of shock, pursuit, reconnaissance, transport, and mobile firepower.” Interestingly, nowhere does he say what immediately leaps to the reader’s mind—that what the Russians knew about horsepower mirrored what the Soviets understood about tanks during World War II.

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