

"The Enemy is Fearsome but God is Merciful", lithographic propaganda poster of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904.

Measures 26" x 16 1/4" (42 x 69 cm) in overall size. Marked immediately below the image on the lower left: "Cleared by Military Censorship, Moscow, 28 February 1904." (Note that this date is according to the old Julian calendar used in Russia at the time; it is March 13th according to the new Gregorian calendar that had been adopted by most of the rest of the world.) Publisher's information is on the right side: "Printed by the E. I. Krivolapova's Chromo- Lithography in Moscow".

At the bottom margin is a poem which is in the same spirit as the artwork: ridiculing the Japanese for coveting Korea and promising quick retribution. The Russian dressed in traditional garb is leaping from the patch of land marked "Korea" onto the island marked "Japan" with a strait in between chockfull of wrecked and sinking Japanese warships (speaking of the press fanning unrealistic expectations!) Note also the bastion far behind bristling with cannon and marked "Manchuria". The figures on the left represent Chinese and Frenchman plotting and arguing over what to do next, with an American watching them with unease.

The text at the bottom is in the form of loosely connected rhymes (today, one could say racist rap lyrics) composed by one D. Gusev. Roughly translated, it goes something like this: "Where are you heading? Hey you, yellow-faced, where are you running in such a rash? Don't assume I am so simple if instead of a belt I have a plain sash. There is room enough for everyone inside my mitten. When I hit you with my peasant fist you will forget, slanty eyed, how to fight or attack like a bandit at night. See how the vile one got so bold - must have learned from the Yankees how to build fire ships! Those tricks are old. The swamp goblin wants Korea, so we are told! How about his neck for some punishment to unfold? You pug-nosed fool, I will give you a bunch of knocks on the back of your head. Or I will stick you inside the upper of my boot, you bet! Do not irk Mother-Russia, for the Russian is not a coward and will not play dead!"

The poster's central image is in very good condition. The colors are bold and fresh. The lower edge shows the fraying and splitting typical of posters and prints that have been stored rolled and standing on their ends for over a hundred years. There are a few clips, but they only just barely affect the text that remains fully legible. Two small pieces of archival tape are applied on verso along the right and upper edges to prevent tears from developing further. All the imperfections are relatively minor in nature and will be almost completely concealed from view by a mat when the poster is professionally framed, so the poster will display beautifully.

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