



Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War (Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book)

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Although often framed as an economic, military, and diplomatic confrontation, the Cold War was above all a conflict of ideas. In official pronouncements and publications as well as via radio broadcasts, television, and film, the United States and the Soviet Union both sought to extend their global reach as much through the power of persuasion as by the use of force. Yet of all the means each side employed to press its ideological case, none proved more reliable or successful than print.

In this volume, scholars from a variety of disciplines explore the myriad ways print was used in the Cold War. Looking at materials ranging from textbooks and cookbooks to art catalogs, newspaper comics, and travel guides, they analyze not only the content of printed matter but also the material circumstances of its production, the people and institutions that disseminated it, and the audiences that consumed it. Among the topics discussed are the infiltration of book publishing by propagandists East and West; the distribution of pro-American printed matter in postwar Japan through libraries, schools, and consulates; and the collaboration of foundations, academia, and the government in the promotion of high culture as evidence of the superiority of Western values.

At the same time, many of the qualities that made print the preferred medium of official propaganda also made it an effective instrument for challenging Cold War orthodoxies at home and abroad. Because printed materials were relatively easy to transport, to copy, and to share, they could just as well be used to bridge differences among people and cultures as to exploit them. They also provided a vehicle for disseminating satire and other expressions of dissent.

In addition to the volume editors, contributors include Ed Brunner, Russell Cobb, Laura Jane Gifford, Patricia Hills, Christian Kanig, Scott Laderman, Amanda Laugesen, Martin Manning, Kristin Matthews, Hiromi Ochi, Amy Reddinger, and James Smith. Together their essays move beyond traditional Cold War narratives to gauge the role of a crucial cultural medium in the ideological battle between the superpowers and their surrogates.

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