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Moscow Society in the Napoleonic Era: Cultural Tradition and Political Stability

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Abstract

Moscow society in the early 19th century was dominated numerically by the poor, and socioeconomically and politically by a tiny aristocratic elite. However, as this paper argues on the basis of quantitative as well as narrative sources, there was also a small middle class that exhibited the behaviors and values typical of middle classes elsewhere and that helped to catalyze the liberalization of 19th century European society. However, Moscow's destruction in 1812 dealt a powerful blow to the middle class's fragile economic base and sense of status security, thereby consolidating support for the conservative ideology advocated by the Russian regime throughout the first half of the 19th century.