CHAPTER 4
Propaganda of Hatred and the Great Terror.
A Nordic Approach

Andrej Kotljarchuk

Genocide Studies have shown that the Holocaust was prepared through a propaganda campaign of anti-Semitism that was filtered to society through the mass media (Glass 1997: 129–45; Herf 2006: 17–49; Jones 2011: 487–498). Less is known about the role of propaganda in the so-called national operations of the NKVD in 1937–1938. The Stalin dictatorship was one of the first modern propaganda political regimes (Kenez 1985; Brandenberger 2011). The Soviet state monopolized the press, cinema and theater and almost totally controlled the public space. One can believe that, because unlike the Moscow trials the national operations were secret, the use of propaganda was minimal. This is not correct. Unprecedented mass arrests of members of the ethnic communities required massive propaganda. The aim of this paper is to analyse the ideas, technologies, aims and target groups of the propaganda campaign during the national operations of the NKVD. The study is focused on the local press in the Swedish and Finnish minority areas.

The early Soviet Union was unlike many other states in Europe, not just because of the abolition of private property and the dictatorship of the Communist Party, but also because of its nationalities policy based on internationalism. The Soviet Union was practically the first great power in the world that systematically promoted the national consciousness of ethnic minorities and established for them institutional forms characteristic of a modern nation. In 1923, the Bolsheviks proclaimed a policy of self-determination and cultural and linguistic rights for all minorities, referred to as Lenin’s nationalities policy (Martin 2001). This policy changed dramatically when, in 1937, the NKVD began its national operations aimed at executing members of various ethnic minorities. In the first operation, personally initiated by Stalin, Germans were the target, while the second and largest was directed against Poles. Numerous national operations organized by the NKVD in August 1937–November 1938 targeted people of Finnish, Greek, Latvian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Iranian and Afghani descent (Okhotin & Roginsky 1999: 35–74; Kott 2007: 42–54). According to official data, a total of 335,513 people were arrested in the course of the national operations, and 247,157 of those arrested were shot (Werth 2003: 232).
In Karelia alone, the Finnish operations resulted in the arrest of 4,700 individuals of Nordic origin, including 27 former members of Finland’s parliament (Takala 1998: 199; List 2016). The Great Terror practically destroyed the Executive Committee of the Communist International (Chase 2001). Among the victims of the Great Terror were the prominent figures of the Nordic communist movement, top politicians and military commanders.1 Altogether, 694 Finns, 23 Norwegians, and 6 Swedes were arrested in the Murmansk region in 1937–1938, approximately half of the adult population belonging to these nationalities (Mikolyuk 2003: 62–63). A total of 27 Finns were arrested in Uura, the administrative centre of the Finnish national rayon, accused of being members of a fictitious Finnish underground espionage counter-revolutionary organization (Kotljarchuk 2017).2 Similarly, 22 Swedes were arrested in Gammalsvenskby and accused of being members of a fictitious Swedish underground espionage counter-revolutionary organization (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 132–191). The arrested people

1 Among them were: Allan Wallenius (1890–1942), a Swede from Finland. One of the most prominent leftist intellectuals and Director of the Communist International Library in Moscow. Arrested by the NKVD on 16 February 1938 and sentenced to 5 years in prison. Died in the NKVD prison in Kuybyshev (for more information about him, see Mustelin 1984); Victoria Vilhelmsso (1899–1937), member of the VKP(b), editor-in-chief at the publishing house Foreign Workers in the USSR. Arrested on 27 July 1937 and executed on 15 November 1937; Edvard Gylling (1881–1938), a Swede from Finland, Finnish and Soviet politician, member of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, Associate Professor of statistics at Helsinki University, member of Finland’s parliament, head of the Central Bank of Finland (1918), a resident of the Soviet Union since 1920, head of the Karelian autonomy. In 1935–1937 Research Fellow at the Institute of International Economics in Moscow. Executed on 14 June 1938 (see Baron 2007); Valter Bergström (1899–1938), born in Helsinki in a Swedish family. Member of VKP(b) and general-in-chief of the Soviet Marine Air Forces. Executed on 27 July, 1938; Eyolf Mattsson-Ignaeus (1897–1965), a Swede from Åland. Member of VKP(b), commander of Karjalan jääkäriprikaati ['Karelian infantry brigade']. Head of Department at Moscow Military Academy. On 1 January 1937 he was convicted to death, but was instead sentenced to 10 years in prison (see Kivalo & Mittler 2000); Peter Åkerman (1888–1938), born in Sweden, member of the Communist Party of Sweden. Head of Archangelsk paper pulp factory. Arrested on 14 December 1937 and executed on 19 February 1938; Erik Tamberg (1893–?), born in Oslo, member of the Communist Party of Norway. Senior Researcher at the state company Karelles. Arrested by the NKVD on 11 October 1937 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in the Gulag; Arist Serk (1895–?), born in Finland to a Norwegian family, member of the Communist Party of Finland, senior economist at Kola State Geological-Exploration Company. Arrested by the NKVD on 2 March 1938 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in the Gulag.

2 Rayon (also spelled raion in English) is a type of administrative unite in the Soviet Union such as a part of an oblast.
simply disappeared. In reality, most of them were murdered and their corpses buried in secret places. The executions were decided not by a court, but by a so-called troika—a three-person body made up of the local NKVD chief, the local prosecutor and the local secretary of the Communist Party.

The organisation of Nordic national operations is complicated. Finns were subject to a special Finnish operation (Kostiainen 2000; Golubev & Takala 2014: 121–156; Kotljarchuk 2014b; Kotljarchuk 2017) while small-numbered communities of Soviet Swedes and Norwegians were not the target of national operations. However, the mass-violence against them was designed in the same way as the national operations (Kotljarchuk 2014a; Kotljarchuk 2015). The Sami is an indigenous minority of Russia and yet they were one of the principal targets for the national operations of the Murmansk NKVD (Kotljarchuk 2012). This chapter presents a comparative study of the propaganda hatred campaign in the course of the national operations of the NKVD in the Nordic minority areas. The author discusses the ideas, the aims and the target groups of the state-run propaganda, and the role of the mass media in the preparation, progress and support of mass violence.

Method, Theoretical Frameworks and Aims of the Study

Kristina Lundgren, Birgitta Ney and Torsten Thurén developed a method that was adopted for this study consisting of a set of analytical tools for the investigation of newspapers. First, one must look more carefully at the newspaper in which the article is published: its language, circulation, area of distribution and political complexion. Second, the scholar should note how the article was published, that is, where in the newspaper the editorial board placed the article, the length of the text, primary or reprint publication etc. Third, the researcher should look at images and photographs and their relation to the content, and whether they are an interplay with other items in the newspaper in question. The next step is to study what the article is about, what facts, terms and quotations have been used, and whether it refers to past events. Then one should look at how the article is structured. The publication might be also linguistically analyzed with a focus on the tone of the text, interpretation and the selection of keynote words, the so-called wording. In addition, it is important to study how events have been dramatized and how the dramatic sequence in the text is presented: who is guilty and who are heroes and observers (Lundgren, Ney & Thurén 1999).

Leo Kuper points out that mass violence is not triggered by already existing conditions within a society. Rather, they occur when powerful
groups—e.g., politicians and media opinion-makers—decide to define and isolate a specific group of people (Kuper 1982: 40–56). Jacques Sémelin (2007) sees ethnic discrimination as part of a dynamic state structure with, at its core, the matrix of a social imaginaire that, responding to social fears, proposes the need to identify, exclude and, possibly, eliminate an internal enemy. Sémelin’s method helps to identify the mechanisms by which mass media propaganda can become a legitimate tool for political action.

The scholars have put forward different points regarding the performance of propaganda in Stalin’s Soviet Union from the successful indoctrination of the population (Kotkin 1997; Bonell 1997) to popular resistance (Davies 1997) and systematic failure (Brandenberger 2011). Some scholars argue for a highly centralized implementation of the national operations, the design and progress of which were planned in detail in Moscow. Other scholars have suggested that the exceptional scale of the mass arrests during the national operations might be explained by the role of local authorities, who turned a well-planned scheme of repressions into “a flight into chaos” (Werth 2003: 216–217).

How was the propaganda hatred campaign organized on the eve, during the progress and in the final stage of the national operations? What ideas, aims and target groups did the propaganda campaign have? Was the campaign orchestrated from Moscow or very much dependent on the initiative of local authorities? What about the results of the state-run propaganda campaigns in 1937–1938? A comparative study of the press in the remote areas of the Soviet Union can bring some light on this issue.

Historians have put forward many explanations for the mass repression of various ethnic groups committed by Stalin’s regime. Two approaches are particularly relevant. Most scholars focus on the security dilemma in the border areas, suggesting a need to secure the ethnic integrity of Soviet space against neighbouring capitalistic enemy states. They stress the role of international relations and believe that representatives of the so-called “Western minorities” were killed or deported not because of their ethnicity, but rather because of their connection to countries hostile to the Soviet Union and fear that they might be disloyal to the Bolshevik regime (Werth 2003; Mann 2005: 318–328; Dönninghaus 2011). Other scholars argue that the Soviet terror against minorities was similar to a genocide, based on ethnic criteria (Kostiainen 2000; Norman 2010, Snyder 2010: 92–108). The results of this study may contribute to the discussion about the systematic nature of Stalin’s terror and the role of mass propaganda.
Historical Background

Two remote areas in the northern and southern borderlands of the Soviet Union were chosen for this study: the Finnish national rayon (Ru. Finskiy natsional’nyy rayon) on the Kola Peninsula and the Swedish national rural council (Ukr. Shveds’ka natsyonal’na sil’ska rada) in the Ukrainian steppes. The 1928 regional census counted 2,111 Finns in Murmansk region, making up approximately 7.7 per cent of the region’s entire population of 27,229. Like elsewhere in the North Calotte, fishermen and hunters of sea animals coexisted there with reindeer herders and farmers, creating a mix of Scandinavian and Finno-Ugric cultures (Elenius et al. 2015: 219–220). The Finnish national rayon was established in 1930. Its administrative centre was Murmansk and later Ura-Guba (Uura in Finnish). Fishermen from Finland and Sweden-Norway founded Ura-Guba in 1864. A Finnish school was opened in the village in 1868 and the Finnish Lutheran church in the village was founded the same year. With a population of 450 people, Uura was the largest settlement of the Finnish national rayon. About 58 per cent (1,297) of the population of the rayon at that time was Finnish. Together with Sami, Norwegians and Swedes, they made up the majority, 72 per cent, of the entire population (Murmanskiy okrug 1929: 10–12). The Finnish national rayon was abolished in 1939 and is today a part of Kola District of the Murmansk region, Russia.

Staroshveds’ke (Gammalsvenskby in Swedish) was founded in 1782 in the Kherson region, by a group of 965 Swedish fishermen from the island of Dagö. Here, the Swedish islanders were to build a prosperous fishing industry centre. Before the 1917 Revolution, Gammalsvenskby was a small town with a population of about 1,200 people, the administrative centre of the Swedish district and the largest Swedish settlement east of Finland (Malitska 2014: 61–85). By 1926, Swedes made up 4 per cent of the rural population of Beryslav Rayon. A part of the Swedes’ Kherson district was inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians, Germans, Russians and Jews (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 46–49). In 1929, the entire Swedish population of Kherson region emigrated to their original homeland. In Sweden, the emigrants were denied a separate settlement and were dispersed throughout the country to undergo “instructtion in the Swedish norms of activities of economic nature and of everyday kind” (Wedin 2007). The colonists who disagreed with this policy (around 300 individuals) returned to the Soviet Union, accompanied by a dozen families of Swedish communists. In 1931, under the auspices of the Communist International, the Swedish Communist Party’s kolkhoz was established in
Gammalsvenskby (Kotljarchuk 2014c: 111–149). Today, Gammalsvenskby is called Zmiivka and is located in the Beryslav Rayon, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine.

**Soviet Press as the Major Transmitter of State-Run Propaganda**

As Peter Kenez point out the Bolsheviks were pathbreakers since they introduced a new approach to politics and a new concept of propaganda (Kenez 1985). The Communist Party attached great weight to the development of local mass media. In 1923, Stalin announced the building of a national-wide network of local press:

> The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer [...] This network of agents will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organization we need—one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country (Stalin [1923] 1953: 289).

In 1937, more than 8,500 titles of newspapers were published in the Soviet Union, 2,500 of which were in the minority languages. The overall circulation of newspapers was 36.2 million copies and they were available to most of the literate population (Ovsepyan 1999: 127). As a rule, the editor-in-chief was a member of the Party nomenclature and took part in the meetings of Soviet and Party leadership.

The central media are represented in this study by three newspapers: *Pravda*, *Izvestiya* and *Pionerskaya Pravda*. *Pravda* ['Truth'] was a leading Party newspaper—an organ of the Central and Moscow Committee of VKP(b). It was established in 1912 and was issued daily in Russian in the 1930s. By 1937, *Pravda*'s circulation was more than two million copies, distributed throughout the country. *Izvestiya* ['News'] was a leading nationwide official newspaper, published in Russian. It was established in 1917 as the organ of the Supreme Soviet Council and Soviet Central Government. In the early 1930s, its circulation was 1.1 million copies. *Pionerskaya Pravda* ['Pioneer Truth'] was a nationwide newspaper for Soviet youth and the organ of the Central and Moscow Committee of Komsomol and had a circulation of 450,000 copies in the early 1930s.

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3 The circulation of Soviet newspapers is based on an open report published in 1931, see *Vsya Moskva*. In the mid-1930s the circulation of Soviet newspapers was classified.
The press was a principal mediator between the government and the rural population in the ethnic borderland. In the 1930s, radio was not yet widespread in Kherson and Murmansk regions. With the growth of literacy among the adult population, more and more people were able to read newspapers. Official newspapers were financed both through subscriptions and governmental funding. Such newspapers were subject to a mandatory subscription for officials, Party and Komsomol members. In rural areas, the mandatory subscription to newspapers was incumbent on local *izba-chital’-nya* ['reading rooms']. Being subsidized by the state, the state newspapers were cheap, and they could thus be afforded also by farmers and fishermen. As early as 1925, the newly established reading room in Gammalsvenskby started subscribing to newspapers. The residents of Gammalsvenskby subscribed individually to more than 100 copies of newspapers (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 60). Newspapers were also available through the so-called *doska pechati*—public noticeboards usually located outside local offices.

Three local newspapers were chosen for the present study. *Naddniprians’ka Pravda* ['On-the-Dniepr truth'] is a Ukrainian-language daily established in 1928 as an official organ of Kherson district where the Swedish national rural council was situated. By 1937, the circulation of *Naddniprians’ka Pravda* was 11,000 copies. *Polarnoin kollektivist/Polyarnyy kollektivist* ['Polar collective worker'] was an organ of the Finnish national rayon. This newspaper was established as a bilingual four-page Finnish-Russian newspaper, which often had parallel texts in these two languages. The newspaper was issued every five days and had a circulation of about 500–600 copies. From January 1938 until July 1940 the newspaper was issued only in Russian. After the deportation of the entire Finnish population from Murmansk region, the publication of the newspaper was stopped on 3 July 1940.

*Polyarnaya Pravda* ['Polar truth'] was an organ of the Murmansk regional government and VKP(b). This daily was established in 1920 and published in Russian. In 1937 the newspaper had a circulation of 12,000 copies. Starting in 1933, *Polyarnaya Pravda* also had an irregularly appearing page in the Sami language (Osipov, E. U. 1933; Osipov, O. O. 1933). The Russian language in the Murmansk press had a lot of Scandinavian loanwords that was not used by the central media, for example: *baksy* ['pair of trousers,' *bukser* in Norwegian], *rokon* ['overcoat,' *rocken* in Swedish], *bot* ['boat,' *båt* in Scandinavian languages], *snurrevad* ['seine net, drag net,' *snurrevad* in Norwegian and Swedish].
1937. New Ideas and New Enemies

The start of the national operations was conceptualized in two main steps. The first concerned the ideological orchestration of the massive ethnic cleansing and the second was the translation of the new ideas to the population. So what kind of ideas did the Soviet leadership formulate in 1937?

At the end of March 1937, Pravda and the Central Party Publishing House printed a speech that Stalin gave at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 3 March 1937 titled “On the errors of Party work and further steps to eliminate the Trotskyite and other hypocrites” (Stalin 1937). The local newspapers reprinted Stalin’s speech (Toveri 1937). In the speech, Stalin formulated the idea of a new wave of repressions and selected the target groups. Prior to 1937, the Soviet terror was directed against various social groups (i.e. kulaks, tsarist military officers and priests), but now Stalin warned about the cleansing of the entire state apparatus and Soviet organizations with a special focus on foreign agents. According to the dictator “the sabotage and subversive spy work of agents of foreign states have beset the Soviet state and our organisations from top to bottom” (Stalin 1937). In 1937, the media dictionary of Soviet newspeak was enriched by a number of Stalin’s neologisms (Pöppel 2007). Stalin’s formula of kapitalisticheskoe okruzhenie ['capitalist encirclement'] resulted in a dramatic turn in both foreign and domestic politics. For the first time, Stalin did not make any exceptions and the Nordic countries entered the list of primary Soviet enemies. The idea of international solidarity with the global working class was abandoned in favour of isolation and distrust of all foreigners. Stalin paid special attention to Scandinavia. Discussing a base for a spy network in the Soviet Union, the leader used Norway as an example and referred to Nordic communists as potential spies:

Take, for example, a group of the shuffler Scheflo in Norway, who gave shelter to the chief spy Trotsky and helped him play mean tricks on the Soviet Union. Doesn’t it look like a reserve team. Who can deny that this counter-revolutionary group will henceforth continue to provide its services to Trotskyite spies and saboteurs? (Stalin 1937)⁴

Stalin’s concept of vykorcevyvanie [‘uprooting’] that was mentioned several times in his March speech is of interest. The technical meaning of uprooting is to remove the stumps and roots of trees and shrubs when clearing an area

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⁴ Olav Scheflo (1883–1943) was the founder of the Communist Party of Norway. He supported Leon Trotsky during Trotsky’s stay in Norway in 1935–1936.
in preparation for road construction works. The political meaning of the term signified a course towards the complete extermination of arrested people. In his address to the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Stalin repeated this idea, which was enthusiastically supported by the political elite:

We are now rich and therefore we have become an object of attention for avaricious countries and fascist states. What counter-weapon do we have? To uproot their agents, to uproot them—this is our counter-weapon. Tumultuous applause, Hurrah! Long live Comrade Stalin! (Khaustov, Naumov & Plotnikova [eds.] 2004: 499)

The title of Stalin’s speech contains the word “elimination” that is reminiscent of the concept of “elimination of the kulaks as a class,” which in the early 1930s was the ground for deportations of well-to-do farmers. Stalin’s March speech also contains a new definition of the enemies of the Soviet regime that differed from previous conceptions of the class enemy: *internal and external enemies, enemies of the Soviet Union* and finally, *enemies of the people*. The creative efforts of Stalin were here focused on finding a better ideological alternative to the concept of *class enemy*. Of all of Stalin’s alternative terms, the concept of *vragi naroda* [‘enemies of the people’] was the most widely spread by Soviet propaganda during the Great Terror. This unclear term was included already in the wording of the 1936 Constitution (article 131). Unlike the concept of *class enemy*, a broader term like *enemies of the people* enabled the arrest of any individual, regardless of class origin and Party and Komsomol membership. The March speech also launched the start of a spy mania campaign:

To take the necessary measures to ensure that our comrades, party and non-party Bolsheviks, know the goals and objectives of the practice and techniques of subversive work, of sabotage and of espionage by foreign agents. (Stalin 1937)

Fulfilling the directive of Stalin, the Soviet intelligence prepared propagandist material on mass espionage for journalists (Lubyanka 2004: 134–135). Dozens of booklets and thousands of articles were published in 1937–1938 describing destructive espionage activities by foreign agents against the Soviet Union. The booklets addressed different groups in society: Party and Soviet officials, NKVD officers, kolkhoz leaders and children (*O metodakh i priemakh* 1937; Zakovskyi 1937a; *Shpionam i izmennikam* 1937; *Shpionazh i razvedka* 1937; *Shpiguny i diversanti* 1937; Zil’ver 1938). In 1937, the Central
Party Publishing House in Moscow published in 300,000 copies the anthology *On the Methods and Techniques of Foreign Intelligence Agencies and their Trotskyite-Bukharin Agents*. The book consists of 15 chapters written by leading experts: the NKVD, military intelligence officers, journalists and lawyers. Comparing the content of this publication with that of the Kherson and Murmansk newspapers, we can conclude that at least seven chapters from the anthology were reprinted in the local Murmansk and Kherson press (Kolesnik 1937; Sokolov 1937; Rubin & Serebrov 1937a; Rubin & Serebrov 1937b; Rubin & Serebrov 1937c; Kandidov 1938; Uranov 1937a; Uranov 1937b; Zakovskiy 1937c; Zakovskiy 1937d; Zakovskij 1937a; Zakovskij 1937b).

Stalin’s idea about a massive espionage activity suggested a wide network of domestic agents. Moscow journalists Nikolay Rubin and Yakov Serebrov were the first to profusely apply Stalin’s ideas for propaganda tasks. In the summer of 1937 the Central Party Publishing House printed a book entitled *On the Sabotage Activity of Fascist Intelligence Services and the Task of Fighting it* (Rubin & Serebrov 1937a). On 29 and 30 July, *Pravda* published an abridged version of the book and a few days later, Kherson and Murmansk newspapers reprinted *Pravda*’s article (Rubin & Serebrov 1937b; Rubin & Serebrov 1937c). Rubin and Serebrov presented new categories of people’s enemies: the double dealers—communists of foreign origin and Soviet citizens who have relatives abroad.

The propaganda campaign aimed to reach all social groups, including children. In 1938, the Central Committee of VLKSM printed 50,000 copies of a book titled *Prick up your Ears* written by Lev Zil’ver (1938). The aim of the book was to educate Soviet children about the massive espionage activity in the Soviet Union and to inform them of how they could help the NKVD to catch underground agents. The author presented thirteen short novels about agents of capitalistic states unmasked by children. Under the heading “Adults and children alike can help the NKVD” *Pionerskaya Pravda* published a series of articles dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the NKVD, calling on children to actively cooperate with the secret police (Varmuzh 1937). Young assistants of security officers in pre-border kolkhozes were looking for and pointing out foreign intelligence agents’ hideouts (Vanya i Anya 1937). Another publication told a story of the second-grade schoolboy Leva who eavesdropped on all the neighbours in the communal apartment and gave valuable information to the NKVD, thus exposing spies and wreckers (Tazin 1937). As Oleg Khlevnyuk points out, hundreds of similar
stories were produced which convinced both old and young that the country really was full of spies (Khlevnyuk 1992: 170).

Nordic Nations and Soviet Propaganda

According to the 1926 Soviet census, there were 150,838 Finns (including Izhorians), 2,495 Swedes and 245 Norwegians in the country. In Soviet imaginaire, Finland was a principal enemy of the socialist state. Nevertheless, Soviet propaganda described the people of Finland as being divided into two opposing groups: working class people and the so-called Belofinny ['White Finns'], a reactionist part of society hostile to socialism and separatist-minded towards Russia. In 1937, this image has changed dramatically and all emigrants from Finland, as well as Russian Finns, began to be considered by the media as potential enemies. In its instructions to the NKVD, the Politwburao emphasised that not only Finnish citizens but also Russian Finns were to be targeted in the mass operations against Finns. In the fall of 1937 the press reported about how hundreds of Finnish agents had been uncovered in Russia. On 14 September 1937, the special correspondent of Pravda in Karelia, Boris Zolotov, informed the readers that the regional authorities in Karelia were totally infiltrated by Finnish agents and that it was “only due to the NKVD that the Finnish espionage network was successfully exposed” (Zolotov 1937b). Four days before, Pravda had published a headline article about the subversive activity of Finland’s agents at the Kondopoga paper mill (Zolotov 1937a).

Neighbouring Sweden and Norway (until 1905 Sweden-Norway) were not on the list of the primary enemies of the Soviet Union. Sweden and Norway were neutral and did not have a common borderline with the Soviet Union. For the Kremlin leadership, it was significant that, unlike their Finnish counterpart, the communist parties in Sweden and in Norway were legal political parties. The Soviet Union had stable diplomatic, economic, and political relations with Sweden and Norway, and the Kremlin described the relationship with these countries as correct (Ken, Rupasov & Samuelson...)

5 Calculated from the 1926 All-Soviet census; http://demoscope.ru; access date 1 October 2016.
6 “О продлении до 15 апреля 1938 года операций по разгрому шпионско-диверсионных контингентов из поляков, латышей, немцев, эстонцев, финн, греков, иранцев, харбинцев, китайцев и румын, как иностранных граждан, так и советских подданных, согласно существующих приказов НКВД СССР,” 31.01.1938. Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI), fond 17, opis 166, delo 585, l. 27.
However, the spiral of the Great Terror changed this positive image and from 1937, numerous articles were published depicting Norway and Sweden as main bases of espionage against the Soviet Union (Kotljarchuk 2014c: 12–13). Leonid Zakovskiy, the NKVD-chief for the Leningrad Oblast and Murmansk district, published a book on the methods of foreign intelligence services in which he presented the Scandinavian countries as a base for foreign espionage against the Soviet Union (Zakovskiy 1937a: 3).7 Journal de Moscou—the organ of the Soviet Foreign Office printed an article about Sweden in which it was argued that Stockholm had become the main base of the German Gestapo (Hôtes inopportuns 1937). The local press elaborated on such ideas. Polyarnaya Pravda, in a special article about Norway, informed their readers that the country had become “awash with spies—agents of German fascism” (Norvegiya 1937).

Izvestiya published an article written by Professor Yevgeny Tarle with the remarkable title “Lessons on History.” This renowned Soviet historian contributed to the injection of anti-Swedish sentiments. Released in 1937 from the Gulag, he was subsequently treated kindly by Stalin and published a number of patriotic anti-Western works. Tarle compared the 1938 Munich Agreement to a coalition of states hostile to Russia, created by Sweden in the early eighteenth century (Tarle 1938). Pionerskaya Pravda published an article titled “Exposing the conspiracy” about the arrest of a spy at the door to a Norwegian consulate (Razoblachennye zagovory 1937). Soviet propaganda became a matter of great concern for the Swedish embassy in Moscow which realised that the Kremlin was deliberately building a negative image of Sweden.8 Joseph Davies, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow in 1936–1938 noted that the notion of an “active internal espionage,” which had not been used by Soviet propaganda prior to 1937, suddenly appeared on the eve of the Great Terror. The American diplomat described these techniques as having been directly borrowed from Nazi Germany (Davies 1941: 273).

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7 Leonid Zakovskiy (aka Henriks Stubis, 1894–1938) was a Latvian Bolshevik, organizer of the Great Terror in the Murmansk region and Deputy Commissar of the NKVD of the Soviet Union. He was arrested on 29 August 1938 and has never been rehabilitated.

Spies in the Tundra and in the Steppes

The local media elaborated on Stalin’s ideas about total espionage. In 1937, Kherson and Murmansk newspapers reported constantly on a sharp intensification of espionage activities in the entire world and in the deep Soviet hinterland (Buty pil’nymi 1937; Shpionskaya organizatsiya 1937; Derzkaya vykhodka 1937; Zorko okhranyat’ 1937; Poymali shpiona 1937; Kolhospniki zatrimali shpiguna 1937; Ribalki dopomogli zatrimati shpiguna 1937; Abuzov 1937a; Shakhnovich 1937; Kandidov 1938).

On 11 July 1937, the chief of the secret political department of the NKVD for the Leningrad Oblast and Murmansk district, Petr Korkin, published an article in *Leningradskaya Pravda* with the remarkable title “On the subversive activities of foreign intelligence services in the rural area.” Korkin claimed that in recent time the remote kolkhozes had become an active field for foreign espionage activity:

> Naive people believe that we have to deal with the capitalist encirclement [Stalin’s term] only on the borders of the Soviet Union, at frontier points or, finally, in large industrial centers and big cities. Meanwhile the capitalist encirclement, as shown by numerous facts, sends its spies to the most remote areas, small settlements, villages and kolkhozes of our country. (*Leningradskiy martirolog* 1995: ill. 11)

In order to enhance the effect of the breaking news, many such publications were illustrated with propagandist posters. In the article “Crisis of foreign bourgeoisie intelligence services,” *Polarnoin kollektivisti* reprinted a poster from the central newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* made by Vasily Fomichev. The poster “K nogtiu” ['Crush under a nail'] shows a hand of the NKVD policeman that crushes a foreign spy under his nail (*Krizis inostrannykh* 1937). On 2 August 1937 *Polyarnaya Pravda* reprinted on its front page the poster “Ezhovye rukavitsy” ['Yezhov’s work gloves'] from *Izvestiya*, designed by Boris Efimov. The poster, which became an iconic image of the Great Terror, has a double sense in Russian: on the one hand it shows the NKVD-chief Nikolay Yezhov in gauntlet gloves, and on the other ezhovye rukavitsy means ‘hedgehog gloves’ in Russian.

The publications emphasized that the NKVD was facing not just the activities of individual spies, but also extensive espionage networks covering numerous regions. *Polyarnaya Pravda*, referring to Stalin’s March speech, stressed that “according to Stalin and Marxist thinking the capitalist states now have to send twice or thrice as many enemies, spies, moonbeams and
murderers to Soviet hinterland as before” (Petrov 1937). Instilment of suspicion was combined with detective stories with a touch of pseudoscientific terminology. *Polyarnaya Pravda* told its readers that in Khabarovsk, Japanese agents hold the phone cord to Japan in order to report the results of espionage activity (Derzkaya vykhodka 1937). At the end of July 1937, both *Polyarnaya Pravda* and *Naddniprians’ka Pravda* reprinted an article from *Izvestiya*, “Parcels of diversionists,” written by the well-known journalist Abram Lyass. The first story was about a plant selection breeder who received a parcel from Japan containing a Japanese terry cherry seedling which had been wilfully infected with pest, resulting in the ruining of the whole orchard. The next plot was about an American who “sent to our country cotton seeds, infected with pink worm” (Lyass 1937a; Lyass 1937b). The journalists invented simple stories so that everyone residing in the countryside could easily put himself in the shoes of the characters described. In August 1937, Murmansk and Kherson newspapers reprinted one more article from *Izvestiya*, this time about some kolkhoz farmers who had caught a spy (Poymali shpiona 1937; Kolhospniki zatrimali shpiguna 1937). The non-specific character of such stories (non-named persons, non-concrete geographical places and foreign countries) and the fact that they were based on information that was impossible to verify, made it possible to manipulate public opinion. Additionally, in this way the local press warned people that the next target of mass arrests could be their home area.

In 1937, the local press developed a new propagandist genre. The idea was to reprint in a series of articles booklets about foreign espionage activity written by the country’s leading experts. Thus, in a series of fourteen articles, *Polyarnaya Pravda* reprinted in June 1937 the book *Intelligence and Counter-intelligence* from *Pravda*. A Soviet edition of the book *Spy and Counter-Spy*, written by the American journalist Richard Wilmer Rowan (Rowan 1928), was published in 1937 by the Central Social-Economic Publishing House in Moscow in 350,000 copies (Rowan 1937). In July 1937 *Naddniprians’ka Pravda* translated into Ukrainian and edited the brochure “Some methods of subversive activity of Trotskyite and fascist spies” written by Andrey Vyshinsky, the Prosecutor General of the Soviet Union (Sokolov 1937). Before that, Vyshinsky’s pamphlet was published by the Central Party Publishing House in no less than 500,000 copies (Vyshinsky 1937).

The local press adopted the plots of the central publications. The Kherson newspapers focused on German spies (Germans were the largest minority group in the region) and the Murmansk press tells stories about the activity of the Finnish intelligence service. In September 1937, *Naddniprians’ka*
*Pravda* translated into Ukrainian and published the booklet *Gestapo* written by Nikolay Abuzov (Abuzov 1937a). The publication was a reprint of *Pravda’s* edition of the book (Abuzov 1937b). The booklet was published in 1937 in Moscow in four editions. The first was printed by the Central Party Publishing House in 300,000 copies (Abuzov 1937c); the second in 400,000 copies by the same publishing house (Abuzov 1937d), the third by the Central Socio-Economic Publishing House in 200,000 copies (Abuzov 1937e) and finally the fourth in 100,000 copies in German by the Publishing House of the Association of the Foreign Workers (Abuzov 1937f). Thus, the total circulation of Abusov’s pamphlet exceeded 2 million copies. The reprints of such publications by local press had two principal purposes, to convince the local population that extensive espionage activities were going on throughout the country and to instruct provincial NKVD policemen how to design cases against internal agents (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 143).

In 1937, the Central Party Publishing House printed 300,000 copies of an anthology on foreign espionage in the Soviet Union. Two chapters were written by Leonid Zakovskiy (*O metodakh i priemakh* 1937). Zakovskiy’s pamphlet was also published in 300,000 copies in a separate edition (Zakovskiy 1937a). In 1937, Zakovskiy presented his booklet at the Leningrad Party Conference, which was attended by the leadership of Murmansk region (Zakovskiy 1937b). *Polyarnaya Pravda* reprinted Zakovskiy’s pamphlet in July–September 1937. In the first chapter with the remarkable title “Spies, saboteurs and wreckers must be totally destroyed,” Zakovskiy quoted Stalin’s March speech and argued three main points: First, the Finnish Intelligence service, together with the German General Staff, had started to build an extensive underground network in the Murmansk area as early as during the First World War. Second, Finnish agents had been recruited both among those members of the Communist Party of Finland who had been exiled to the Soviet Union, and from the Finnish secretariat of the Communist International. Finally, Zakovskiy highlighted that in recent times “a foreign consulate” had started to recruit agents among local people in the remote areas of the Murmansk and Leningrad regions. The ethnicity of ordinary agents was not mentioned, but certain geographical names created the desired effect. Zakovskiy told a story about a spy who came to Murmansk from Ozerko—the Finnish village on the Rybachiy Peninsula. The next story was about the wreckers in Kandalaksha (Kantalahti in Finnish), a town on the White See with a Finnish minority (Zakovskiy 1937c). *Polarnoin kollektivisti* translated Zakovskiy’s pamphlet into Finnish and published it during August–November 1937 in a series of articles (Zakovskij 1937a;
Thus, in the midst of the Great Terror, the NKVD sent a clear signal to potential victims, officials and bystanders about the nature of the ongoing mass arrests.

It was the media that built a propaganda bridge between foreign and domestic agents. The press presented officials in minority areas as agents of foreign intelligence services. But what were spies doing in kolkhozes? Zakovskiy gave an answer to this question: their task was to disorganise the kolkhoz system *ab intra*. Local journalists developed the NKVD-chief’s conception. *Polyarnaya Pravda* explained the reasons for the on-going arrests of officials in Finnish national rayons as follows:

The enemies of the people, hangdog bourgeois nationalists, occupied the leading positions in the rayon and, following the orders of their fascist masters, started to disorganise the kolkhoz system and to destroy the Navy. (Antonov 1937)

In 1937, *Polarnoin kollektivisti* had a special column on the activity of “bourgeois nationalists” and nationalistic public moods in the Finnish rayon. The articles were published both in Finnish and in Russian (Eräs 1937a; Eräs 1937b; Eräs 1937c; Huonon Kasvatustyön 1937; Vykorchevat’ ostatki vrediteley 1937; O mestnom natsionalisme 1937; Gore-rukovoditel’ 1937; Natsionalnye nastroeniya 1937; Bystree likvidirovat’ ostatki 1937; Razgromit’ burzhuaznykh natsionalistov 1937). These publications illustrate a dramatic turn in the Soviet policy, described by Stephen Kotkin as “a strategic shift from the task of building of socialism to that of defending socialism” (Kotkin 1997: 357).

The newspapers reported on numerous meetings at which the population enthusiastically supported the mass arrests. For example, *Polyarnaya Pravda* reported about the meeting of the fishermen of the Finnish kolkhoz Tarmo in Ura-Guba at which they “fully supported” the execution of German spies in Moscow. The local Finns promised “to follow the instructions of Comrade Stalin on the capitalist encirclement and from child to old man jealously guard the borderland and unmask the subversive activity of the enemies” (Zorko okhranyat’ 1937). At a meeting in Toros, Kola-Norwegians accepted the resolution “On the uprooting of the rest of the wreckers” (Vykorchevat’ ostatki vreditelei 1937). In fact, such supposedly spontaneous meetings were organized by the authorities and attendance was compulsory. It was necessary for the Soviet totalitarian regime to obtain the formal support of the ordinary people. Agitation meetings was a propaganda tool that made the majority of society approve the verdict of the NKVD. In the course of such
meetings, the participants seemed to have a sense of involvement in what was going on, a feeling of mutual responsibility was created and strangers came to evoke a general fear of repression.

1938. The Abolishment of Native Schools and Propaganda Campaign

Terry Martin drew attention to the connection between the Great Terror and the elimination of the system of native schools and the expansion of the Russian language in education (Martin 2001: 422–423). According to the Soviet plan of korenizatsiya [‘indigenization’], the nationalities policy, the ethnic borderlands should prioritize native schools in order to promote the ideas of socialism and to nurture a local Party and Komsomol elite. The authorities implied that schooling in their mother tongue would make it easier to involve the young generations of the rural ethnic minorities in the process of socialist construction. Ensuring minority rights meant the creation or development of native pedagogical cadres, schools, textbooks and native-language media. Solving these problems demanded great human and material resources, but the Bolsheviks relied on the reciprocal loyalty of the minorities to the new regime.

Karl Marx’ idea of world revolution played an important role in Lenin’s nationalities policy. In this regard, Karelia, the Finnish national rayon on the Kola Peninsula and the Swedish village in Ukraine were seen as the “Piedmont of Red Scandinavia” (Martin 2001: 51–52). The Swedish colonists were encouraged to learn modern Swedish, the language of the communist party of Sweden, rather than the archaic native dialect. The Party leadership of the Murmansk district counted on the development of the Finnish literary language and the Kola Sami had been given textbooks in the Latin script, not Cyrillic as before 1917. This policy changed when in the midst of the national operations the regime initiated a radical elimination of native schools. On 24 January 1938 the Central Committee of VKP(b) adopted a resolution “On the reorganization of native schools” in which it was stated that:

The special inspection found that enemies of people acting in regional Commissariats for Education forced through the creation of separate native schools; German, Finnish, Polish, Latvian, Estonian, Ingrian, Vepsian and others, turning them into centres of bourgeois nationalist and anti–Soviet influence on schoolchildren. (Gatagova [ed.] 2009: 342–343)
The Politburo formed a special commission on this issue represented by Andrey Zhdanov, Andrey Andreev, Nikolay Bulganin and Petr Tyurkin. Native schools were to be reorganized into ordinary schools of the conventional type. The reorganization was to be started immediately and completed in a very short time, by 1 September 1938. Altogether 237 Finnish schools were closed in Russia, as well as one Swedish school in Ukraine. The Finnish Pedagogical College in Leningrad that educated teachers for Finnish schools in Russia closed. The authorities also dissolved the Sami Faculty at the Murmansk Pedagogical College.

The radical elimination of native schools needed a new propagandist vocabulary. The establishment of native schools used to be described as an impressive achievement within the framework of Lenin’s nationalities policy. In 1938, however, the central media began to present Lenin’s heritage as a subversive activity by bourgeois nationalists. On the first day of the academic year, Izvestiya published the headline “New school year” in which the government explained the reasons for the radical school reform:

Enemies of the people established native schools in which they sabotaged the teaching of the Russian language. Their aim was to separate the fraternal ethnic minorities of the Soviet Union from the Great Russian nation. Now it is time for the Soviet teaching staff to eradicate the results of this sabotage work. (Novyy uchebnyy god 1938)

In the different regions, the local authorities focused on a specific minority. In the Murmansk region it was the Finns. In Ukraine the authorities paid particular attention to Polish, German and Swedish schools. In April 1938, the Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine published a regional resolution on the elimination of native schools. The aggressive wording left no room for discussion:

The special inspection found that the people’s enemies—Trotskyites, Bukharinites and bourgeois nationalists, who had operated in the Ukrainian Commissariat for Education, forced through the creation of separate national German, Polish, and Czech, Swedish, Greek and other schools, turning them into centres of bourgeois nationalist and anti-Soviet influence on school-children [...] Based on the decision of the Central Committee of VKP(B), the Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine considers the existence of special national schools inexpedient and harmful. (Nimtsi v Ukrainy 1994: 100)
In his speech at the XIV Congress of the Ukrainian Communists in June 1938, the leader of the republic, Nikita Khrushchev stressed that:

The agents of the western intelligence services, as well as the Ukrainian nationalists, imposed in Ukraine so-called national schools. In most of the cases, under the guise of national Polish, German, Swedish and other schools, the enemies created a nest for carrying-out counter revolutionary work. (Efimenko 2001: 47)

Murmansk journalists argued in similar way. Nikolay Ivanov, the deputy editor-in-chief of Polarnoin kollektivist explained that:

It was the people’s enemies—nationalists Peterson, Lahdenperä and Salo—who implemented the Finnization of our rayon, claiming that everything must be in Finnish, despite the fact that only 20 per cent of the population of the Murmansk are Finns. They fought hard against the Russian language, tried to preserve the isolation of the Finnish population and despised everything Russian, that is, the Soviet [sic!]. Their politics achieved some success and we now have Finns living in the Soviet Union who do not know the Russian language and do not want to study it. Our young people who graduate from the seven-year [Finnish] school do not speak Russian at all. As a result, these people’s enemies have built on the Kola Peninsula a Chinese wall between the Finnish and Russian nations. (Ivanov 1938)

The NKVD had already arrested the Finnish officials mentioned by Ivanov. The local opinion-makers continued to brainwash the readers into believing that the elimination of Finnish schools and the Russification were for the good of the Finnish population:

The Finnish language does not allow our Finns to grow culturally together with all the Soviet people and take part in the development of the socialist culture. On the contrary, it paves the way for the development of a bourgeois

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9 Karl Peterson (1890–1938) was born in Helsinki in a Swedish family. He was deputy head of the State Fishing Company Murmanryba. Arrested by the NKVD on 7 September 1937 and shot 18 January 1938 in Leningrad. Ejnar Lahdenperä (1898–1937), head of the Finnish national rayon, was born in Ura-Guba in a family of Finnish colonists. In 1932 he graduated from Lenin Party School in Leningrad. In September 1937 he was accused by the secretary of Murmansk Committee of VKP(b) Ermil Babachenko of being “a leader of the underground Finnish nationalist counter-revolutionary organization.” Removed from his position, he committed suicide in September 1937. Johannes Salo (1900–1938), head of the Finnish kolkhoz Heräytys and a member of the VKP (b), was born in Terioki. He was arrested by the Murmansk NKVD on 5 August, 1937 and shot on 8 January 1938 in Leningrad.
culture in the spirit of nationalism. Ignorance of the Russian language puts Finns below Russians. Finnish literature in the Soviet Union is extremely poor, and lack of a knowledge of the Russian language results in a loss of all perspectives. Universities work in Russian. Therefore, the resolution [On the reorganization of native schools] of the Party and the government is timely and politically correct. The Russian language is the language of Lenin and Stalin, the language of Revolution that opens a wide road for our youth. (Ivanov 1938)

In Ukraine the Russification of native schools was explained in similar way:

The enemies made it so that the teaching in many schools of Ukraine is in German, Polish and other languages, but not in Russian. Now; however, everybody has to learn Russian in order to fight under the banner of Lenin and Stalin for the complete victory of Communism.10

Thus, for the first time in history, the Russian language was proclaimed to be the only true Soviet language. Simultaneously with the closing of the national schools, Russian became a compulsory subject throughout the Soviet Union. Stalin initiated this measure personally (Efimenko 2001: 43). The dictator explained the need for non-Russian youth to study Russian by stating that Red Army soldiers had to be able to understand perfectly orders given in Russian (Gatagova [ed.] 2009: 298–299). On 17 January 1938, the Finnish edition of Polarnoin kollektivisti was discontinued and the Finnish title disappeared from the front page flag. The explanation was Kafkaesque:

The Finnish-language edition of our newspaper does not meet the demands of the local Finnish population [sic!]. In addition to the absence of control over publications in the Finnish language, the quality of the articles was very low. Therefore the newspaper was totally useless. (Ivanov 1938)

In fact, the Finnish-language press in the Soviet Union was totally eliminated by the authorities in the aftermath of the Great Terror. In 1937, the Leningrad authorities closed down the Finnish-language newspapers Vapaus, Nuori Kaarti and Kipinä (Smirnova 2006: 37–46), calling them “nests of spies and bourgeois nationalists.” The leading Finnish newspaper of Karelia, Punainen Karjala, was also abolished in 1937. Polarnoin kollektivisti was actually the

last Finnish-language newspaper in the interwar Soviet Union. Alongside the abolishment of the newspaper, the NKVD also eliminated its editorial board.\footnote{The editor-in-chief Vilhelm Kivelä (born in 1900 in Belokamenka, Murmansk region) was arrested by the NKVD on 13 September 1937 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Editor Rickard Hiarkinen (born in 1914 in Vichana, Murmansk region) was arrested by the NKVD on 9 August 1937 and executed on 20 December 1937 in Leningrad. Typographer Rickard Birget (born in 1916 in Ara-Guba, Murmansk region) was arrested by the NKVD on 9 August, 1937 and executed on 20 December 1937 in Leningrad. Journalist Verner Ranta (born in 1912 in Rosliakovo, Murmansk region) was arrested by the NKVD 23 February 1938 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He died in the Gulag.}

In February 1938 *Polyarnyy kollektivist* published an address of the Murmansk authorities, entitled “To all Finnish workers in the Polar rayon” in which the great benefits of the school reform was once again explained again to the Finns (K vsem trudyashchimsya finnam 1938). In reality, the changeover to teaching in a non-mother tongue was accompanied by a stigmatization of native cultures and psychological stress for non-Slavic school-children (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 188–190). In order to obtain formal support for the russification campaign, the authorities organized a meeting in Ura-Guba where the Finns had approved with a solid vote the abolishment of native schools (Miting v Ura-Guba 1938).

The radical shift of Soviet school policy did not go unnoticed in Scandinavia. In July 1938, the Swedish press attaché in Moscow Nils Lindh sent Minister of Foreign Affairs Rickard Sandler the note “The language issue in the Soviet Union and its political background.” In particular, the diplomat wrote that the decision to introduce Russian in native schools was, beyond a shadow of a doubt, made in Moscow. He put emphasis on the fact that the radical school reform was connected with a strengthening of Moscow’s control over the national autonomies, in which “the issue of the school language is used as a political weapon.”\footnote{“Språkfrågan i Sovjetunionen och dess politiska bakgrund,” Nils Lindh till Hans Excellens Herr Ministern för Utrikes Ärenden Rickard Sandler, den 12 juli 1938. Kungl. Utrikesdepartementet. Avdelning HP 514. Grupp 1. Mål: Er. Politisk allmänt Ryssland. Volym LXII 1938. RA, Riksarkivet [‘National Archives of Sweden’].}

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**Conclusion**

Media propaganda played a significant role in the conceptualization and support of the national operations of the NKVD, as well as in the elimination of native schools. Through propaganda, the minority population and local
authorities were prepared for the subsequent mass violence. On the one hand, the national operations were secret; their dates, progress, concrete results, names of arrested people were not reported. On the other, it was not possible to hide mass arrests in a rural ethnic borderland, and the exact number of arrested people became known the next day. Therefore it was necessary for the state to explain what was going on in order to calm bystanders and to inform local village administrations. Many articles placed special emphasis on information about meetings at which ordinary people had unanimously supported the destruction of foreign agents. In the course of such meetings, the participants seemed to feel a sense of involvement in what was going on, a feeling of mutual responsibility was created and strangers came to evoke a general fear of repression. The state-run propaganda support for the national operations was primarily aimed at:

- creating a negative image of the risk group;
- creating an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and suspicion in the native borderland;
- redistributing universal fear to a certain ethnic group;
- neutralizing bystanders to make them behave mechanically, cooperate passively with the government and exhibit non-resistance to mass violence;
- introducing specific explanations for the reasons of mass arrests;
- informing local village authorities about subsequent mass arrests;
- appraising denunciations and collaboration with the secret police;
- serving as a source of information helping local NKVD officers to develop the design of the national operations.

The study confirms the thesis that the propaganda hatred campaign in the local press was orchestrated from Moscow and was systematic in nature. It started simultaneously in the Kherson and Murmansk regions on the eve of the national operations and finished in December 1938 after the end of the NKVD mass operations. A cross-analysis of media publications shows that the topic of foreign and domestic agents and espionage activity became a central issue for the local press precisely during the Great Terror. The official pamphlets and publications of the central media were principal frameworks for the local media. The newspapers reprinted en masse publications of the central media. Sometimes, the plot of some publications was adapted to local circumstances. However, the ideology of internationalism was never completely rejected and in 1937 the press did not accuse entire minorities of
treason. The ethnic cleansing of Finnish and Swedish rural communities proceeded without any protests on the part of the victims and their families. The bystanders, local secret informants and village officials, actively collaborated with the NKVD (Kotljarchuk 2014a: 132–191). The elimination of native schools also ensured that there were no protests from the local population. This means that the propaganda support for the state-run mass violence reached its goal. The Soviet propaganda campaign during the national operations of the NKVD is an early example of what we call today *fake news*—creating a reality out of nothing.

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