

Introduction

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The Problem of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union

Robert Conquest, who popularized the term *the Great Terror* in his classic account of Stalin's purges in 1937–1938, depicts these events as massive repressions first of all of Soviet political, cultural, and military elites (Conquest 1971). But Conquest did not particularly address the role in the turmoil of the 1930s of ethnicity and religious belonging—two categories of central importance in so much of Soviet politics. The Russian “archival revolution”—the newly acquired access to previously unavailable sources from former Soviet archives after 1991—has brought to light new facts on the history of the Great Terror, among other things data on the so-called national operations of the security service (NKVD) against ethnic minorities and details on the repression of religious groups (Samuelson & Sorokin 2007). Even though much information on the repression is still difficult to uncover—as several of the authors in this volume show—the archival revolution has undoubtedly brought new possibilities for research.

The inter-war Soviet Union was unlike many other states in Europe. The differences concern not only the abolition of private property and the establishment of the one-party system, but also a nationality policy based on internationalism (in the sense of ‘inter-ethnicity’) or the solidarity and unity among different ethnic groups. The Soviet Union was in practice the first major state power in the world that systematically promoted the national consciousness of indigenous peoples and established institutional forms characteristic of a modern nation for them. While small-numbered ethnic groups faced discrimination, the Soviet Union proclaimed in 1923 a policy of self-determination and cultural and linguistic rights for all minorities, which they tried to implement during the 1920s (Martin 2001).

However, in the beginning of the 1930s this policy changed radically, and in 1937 the NKVD initiated top-secret “national operations.” The situation in the ethnic and religious communities was rather specific. The Bolsheviks believed that ethnic and religious minorities of rural areas remained behind the progressive development of the population of industrial cities. The cultural and linguistic factors and the isolation of minority communities from

the rest of the population thus required additional surveillance of ethnic as well as religious groups by the secret service. At a meeting of the Politburo on 20 July 1937, Stalin initiated the German operation by writing a proposal that “all Germans working in our military and chemical factories, electrical stations and at construction sites in all regions, must be arrested” (Okhotin & Roginskiy 1999: 35). In total, in 1937–1938, 56,787 ethnic Germans were arrested, of whom 41,898 were shot. Only 820 of them were citizens of the German Reich (Okhotin & Roginskiy 1999: 73–74). The next operation was the “Polish” one, in which 139,815 Soviet Poles were arrested and 111,071 of them executed (Petrov & Roginskiy 1997: 37–38). A number of other secret national operations were organized by the central government in accordance with the models of the German and the Polish operations. Among them were the Korean, Chinese, Afghan, Iranian, Greek, and Bulgarian-Macedonian operations as well as the Finnish and Estonian operations. The local NKVD of Smolensk initiated a national Latvian operation. During this operation, which started on 3 December 1937, 17,851 Soviet citizens, mainly of Latvian origin, were arrested and 13,444 were executed (Kott 2007). A number of smaller operations along so-called “national lines” and in accordance with the national operation model were designed and performed by local police against Japanese, Lithuanians, Norwegians, Sami, and Swedes (Kotljarchuk 2014a; Kotljarchuk 2014b; Kotljarchuk 2015). Altogether within the period of fourteen months, August 1937 to October 1938, 335,513 people were arrested in the national operations of the NKVD and 247,157 of them were shot (Werth 2003: 232). The victims of national operations made up 34 per cent of all the murdered victims of the Great Terror.

Historians have put forward many explanations for the mass repression of various ethnic groups committed by Stalin’s regime, and two approaches are particularly relevant. Most scholars focus on the security dilemma in the border areas, suggesting the need to secure the ethnic integrity of Soviet space *vis-à-vis* neighbouring capitalistic enemy states. They stress the role of international relations and believe that representatives of “Western” minorities were killed not because of their ethnicity, but rather because of their possible connections to countries hostile to the USSR and fear of disloyalty in case of an invasion (Werth 2003; Mann 2005; Kuromiya 2007). Other scholars argue that the Soviet terror against minorities was actually genocide based on ethnic criteria (Kostiainen 2000; Naimark 2010; Snyder 2010: 92–108).

In contrast to the repression of certain ethnic groups, the repression of religious associations, organisations, and individuals was motivated by basic tenets in the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. As Lenin himself put it, dialectical

Marxism was “unconditionally materialist and resolutely hostile to any religion” (Lenin [1909] 1954: 8; cf. Lenin 1973: 402). While he proclaimed religion to be a private matter of no concern for the state—and indeed freedom of religion and conscience were inscribed in the Soviet constitution—Lenin at the same time made it clear that for the Party it was imperative to fight against “ignorance and obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs.” In fact, he claimed that this was the very reason why the Party was founded (Lenin [1905] 1954: 5–6; cf. Lenin 1965: 85–86). This line of thought was phrased in the official slogan for the second congress of the League of the Militant Atheists (Ru. *Soyuz voynstvuyushchikh bezbozhnikov*)—a Party-run voluntary organization with the mission to propagate atheism in publications, lectures, study groups, and rallies—in June 1929: “The struggle against religion is the struggle for socialism” (see Pospelovsky 1987: 49).

If one, as James Ryan (2012: 2) writes, “accepts that Stalin and his colleagues’ professed Leninism was genuinely important for their political practice, then Stalinism should be studied in the light of Leninism.” And Stalin was indeed the one who canonized Lenin’s writings and proclaimed Marxism-Leninism to be the world-view of the Party, and thus of the Soviet state once the Party took totalitarian control. Lenin’s analysis of religion, in an oft-cited passage in his 1905 article “Sotsializm i religiya” [‘Socialism and religion’], explains why fighting against religion became integral to the Bolsheviks’ revolutionary re-creation of society into a new socialist one among the big city elites, factory workers, peasants, and “savage” hunter-gatherers in the periphery of the Soviet Union:

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, crushed by their perpetual work for others, by want and solitude. The impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as the impotence of the savage in his struggle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. To those who all their lives toil and live in want religion teaches humbleness and patience while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But to those who live by the labour of others religion teaches the practicing of charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire exploiting existence and selling them, at a fair price, tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is the opium of the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual hooch [Ru. *sivukha*], in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a reasonably worthy human life. (Lenin [1905] 1954: 3–4; cf. Lenin 1965: 83)

For Lenin, as for Marx, religion was both an effect of unjust socio-economic relations, as well as of impotence before the forces of nature, and an impediment for overcoming these unjust relations and for increasing humans' command over nature. The opium and alcohol metaphors are therefore quite pertinent for their analysis.

Besides being at the heart of the Marxist-Leninist world-view, the Soviet struggle against religion was also motivated by the Bolshevik intolerance of ideological and organizational competitors of all sorts (and some of them were, of course, outright counter-revolutionary). For both of these reasons, the Russian Orthodox Church became the main target of anti-religious measures in the immediate post-Revolutionary years. As the state church of the tsarist Russian Empire, gathering some 70 per cent of the population, for the revolutionaries this church was synonymous with the monarchy that had just been overthrown (Corley 1996: 13). Thus, emptying the cathedrals of clerics and turning the buildings into museums of atheism and the history of religion was an act in the same vein as throwing out the royal family and transforming the Winter Palace into a state museum (Sundström 2007: 84). In both instances, the killing of the representatives of the monarchy and the church was obviously seen as a justified method by the revolutionaries. James Throer (1983: 117–118) has noted that Lenin's and the Party's attitude toward religion became more uncompromisingly hostile from 1917 onwards. Lenin's notorious letter of March 1922 to Molotov and the Politburo on how to handle the resistance against the collection of church valuables (for aid to the starving in Ukraine) is an example of that (see e.g. Ryan 2012: 178–181; Troyansky [ed.] 1991: 3–11). In this letter, Lenin elevates violence and terror to a legitimate revolutionary strategy that very well might have set the tone for the subsequent decades of Bolshevik tactics towards real and imagined opponents of socialist reconstruction:

[...] if it is necessary to resort to harsh methods in order to implement a given political objective, then it is necessary to implement these measures in the most energetic manner and in the shortest period of time, because the popular masses will not tolerate a long application of harsh measures. (Lenin cited and translated in Troyansky [ed.] 1991: 4)

And later in the same letter he specified what “harsh measures” in this case concretely meant: “The more reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we are able to execute by firing squad regarding this matter, the better” (Lenin in Troyansky [ed.] 1991: 6).

The combination of the ideological imperative—that religion should be combatted and was predicted to perish in the socialist society—and the ousting of competitors in directing the thoughts and behaviours of Soviet citizens led to recurrent onslaughts on religious representatives and associations in the Soviet Union. However, the religious policy of the Bolshevik regime fluctuated between periods of harsher and more lenient methods of combatting religion. Oksana Beznosova in this volume presents a periodisation of the authorities' treatment of Evangelical associations in Ukraine between 1918 and 1941. There have been many attempts at periodisations of Soviet religious policy in previous research (see e.g. Vorontsov 1973; Pospelovsky 1987; Corley 1996), and P. Walters (1993: 3) comments, while presenting his own, that any such attempt will be disputable. This is due, among other things, to the fact that different religious groups were treated differently during different years and in different areas of the vast Union, and local authorities at times took measures that were not in phase with central policy. For instance, what Beznosova describes as the “Golden Decade” for Ukrainian Evangelists, 1918–1928, was at least in the first years one of the most severe times for the Russian Orthodox Church. But for Protestants and some other minority religions, including shamanism (see Bulgakova & Sundström in this volume), the decade meant relative religious freedom during the NEP, even compared to pre-revolutionary times when Russian Orthodoxy claimed hegemony over the souls in the empire.

Periodisations of various kinds might be instructive in order to connect the fluctuations to the varying conditions for fulfilling the Marxist-Leninist vision of an atheist society, to other projects of Soviet authorities, and to concrete decrees and laws passed by the Party. As some of the studies in this book shows, the default hostility towards religion among Soviet communists became entangled in other campaigns and policies such as the nationality policy, dekulakisation, collectivisation, and the hunt for “counter-revolutionaries,” “enemies of the people,” and “foreign spies” as well as in the appeal from Stalin for patriotic unity during the Second World War and the cleansing of occupied areas after the war. In the case of the indigenous peoples of the Soviet North, the fight against shamanism was not only a consequence of the general struggle against religion (once shamanism had been classified as a religion), but also of a general civilisation project by Soviet authorities. Shamanism was seen as an integral part of the old indigenous societies that were to be reconstructed under socialism, and it was to be liquidated together with illiteracy, ignorance, slavery, patriarchalism, the

abuse of women, malnutrition, bad hygiene, infant mortality, rampant diseases, etc. (Sundström 2007: 111–164).

This Anthology

The present anthology is the outcome of an international research network created by the editors, Andrej Kotljarchuk and Olle Sundström. Kotljarchuk, as an historian, has previously studied the destiny of ethnic Swedes in Soviet Ukraine, and Sundström, being an historian of religions, has undertaken research specialising in Soviet religious and ethnic policies against the indigenous peoples of the Soviet North. To elucidate unsolved research issues on the consequences of the Great Terror for these and closely related minority groups, we invited a range of specialists to a workshop at Umeå University in Sweden, 26–27 January 2011, under the heading “The Baltic and Arctic Areas under Stalin. Ethnic Minorities in the Great Soviet Terror of 1937–38.” At the workshop, 17 papers by scholars from nine different countries (Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United States) were presented. As a follow-up to this event, a limited group of the network—Boris Belenkin and Tatiana Bulgakova (Russia), Marc Junge (Germany), Art Leete (Estonia), and Andrej Kotljarchuk and Olle Sundström (Sweden)—met in Umeå for a one-day workshop in June 2012 to plan the present publication. In the discussions at the latter workshop, the scope of the project was somewhat widened to include studies of the situation for various ethnic and religious minorities during the Soviet repression of the 1930s. Finally, the network held a conference, “Soviet Minorities in the Great Terror,” in Umeå, 28–31 January 2013, with support from the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies and the Swedish Institute.

This anthology presents studies of Stalinism in the ethnic and religious borderlands of the Soviet Union. The authors not only cover hitherto less researched geographical areas, but have also tried to address new questions related to the research material. Most of the contributors to this book use a micro-historical approach. With this approach, it is not the entire area of the country with millions of separate individuals, but rather isolated and cohesive ethnic and religious communities that are in focus. This micro-historical method allows the researcher to significantly reduce the scale of observations and thus to concentrate on a particular social group, but only after having processed a massive complex of written and oral sources (Levi 2001). Micro-history does not mean ignoring a macro-historical perspective. What happened on the local level had an all-Union context, and communism, like

Nazism, was a European-wide phenomenon. This means that the history of local minorities in the Soviet Union during Stalin's reign cannot be grasped outside the national and international context. The selection of original papers for this volume is by no means exhaustive for the theme "Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin's Soviet Union." Rather, the chapters are case studies on different minority groups that hopefully can encourage further micro-historical studies on other minorities so that a more complete picture of the causes and effects of the repression during Stalinism can be achieved.

The Soviet Union was one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-confessional states in the world. The first complete census in the Soviet Union (1926) included 188 ethnic categories classified around numerous linguistic groups. According to the census, the Eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) constituted the majority, or 77.5 per cent, of the total population of 146 million. The next largest ethnic groups in the Soviet Union were the Kazakhs (3,968,289 individuals), the Uzbeks (3,904,622 individuals), the Tatars (3,271,842 individuals), the Jews (2,672,499 individuals), the Georgians (2,199,461 individuals), the Armenians (1,567,568 individuals) and the Mordvins (1,340,415 individuals). Since early modern times, hundreds of thousands of non-Russian Europeans had either moved to Russia or become subjects of the tsar as a result of Russian conquest. The 1926 census reported 1,238,549 Germans, 782,334 Poles, 398,998 Finns (including Karelians), 213,765 Greeks, 154,666 Estonians, 141,703 Latvians and 111,296 Bulgarians (*Vsesoyuznaya perepis' 1926*).

Some thirty indigenous peoples populated the country, from the Sami people (1,720 individuals) on the Kola Peninsula to the Nivkh people (4,076 individuals) in the basin of the Amur River and on Sakhalin. The largest ethnic minority of the Soviet Far East was the Koreans (86,999 individuals). There were also 390,385 foreign citizens residing in the country.¹ Apart from the Roma, practically all ethnic groups in the Soviet Union had their own compact territory and achieved administrative and cultural autonomy after 1922.

The Soviet Union had large communities of adherents of major religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. After the Great Northern War and the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, Christianity was represented in the Russian Empire not only by Orthodoxy, but also by Catholicism and Protestantism of various branches. The North Caucasus, Central Asia and

¹ Calculated by Andrej Kotljarchuk from the 1926 All-Union census; <http://demoscope.ru>; access date 1 October 2017.

Volga regions were the traditional centres for Muslim communities, while Kalmykia, Buryatia and Trans-Baykal were centres of Buddhism, and Ukraine and Belarus of Judaism. So-called shamanism was the religious practice among the various indigenous peoples of northern Russia, Siberia and the Far East.

In the first part of this volume, the contributors discuss the general approach of the national operations of the NKVD. The second part focuses on three case studies of the Great Terror in Soviet ethnic regions. The third part analyses the situation of the religious minorities in the inter-war Soviet Union, both in Ukraine and in the Soviet North.

In the first chapter, "The Great Terror. New dimensions of research," Hiroaki Kuromiya examines the aims of the Great Terror and, in particular, the national operations of the NKVD. He points out that access to the formerly closed Soviet archives in Russia has serious shortcomings and tends to neglect questions of intelligence and counterintelligence. These kinds of sources remain classified. However, the lack or paucity of information should not obscure the understanding of the Great Terror. In the 1930s, Germany, Poland, and Japan were among the most actively engaged countries in undercover activities against the Soviet Union. Their methods were known as "total espionage." Stalin took no chances, turning the tables on these countries by practising "total counter-espionage." Thus, according to Kuromiya, the Great Terror should be seen as the culmination of Stalin's total counter-espionage and the elimination of any possible foreign penetration into the Soviet Union.

In Chapter 2, Andrey Savin turns the attention to the "ethnification" of Stalin's terror. Seen from the perspective of recent studies and newly available archival sources, Savin argues that the NKVD directives and the documents of prosecutors' inspections describe sweeping mass arrests of members of "Western" minorities without any evidence for any crimes. He also shows that the Stalinist leadership and the NKVD perceived certain national minorities as hostile and "counter-revolutionary" as early as the 1920s. In the mid-1930s, this concept was taken as the ideological basis of ethnic cleansing. The specificity of the national operations minimized Party and state control over the actions of the NKVD, which had the main influence on the magnitude of arrests and executions. Savin notes that on the one hand the determinant factor in the fate of the victims of the national operations was the outer signs of their belonging to a "malicious" ethnic group. On the other hand, his local study on the implementation of the German operation in Western Siberia casts doubt on the unambiguity of such an interpretation.

Chapter 3, “‘He who is not with us is against us.’ Elimination of the ‘fifth column’ in the Soviet Union, 1937–1938,” provides an insight into the political language and nature of the German operation of the NKVD. Victor Dönninghaus shows how Stalin’s ideas of the state-and-military confrontation directed the national operations against everyone that in some way was related to the states of the “hostile capitalist encirclement.” Thus, he argues that the selection criterion for the national operations was not ethnicity. Rather, potential ties with hostile foreign countries were taken as the primary reason for repression. This marks a difference between these national operations and Stalin’s deportations during the Second World War, which touched upon all representatives of purportedly “disloyal” minorities without exception.

In the fourth chapter, entitled “Propaganda of hatred and the Great Terror. A Nordic approach,” Andrej Kotljarchuk discusses the propaganda of hatred during the national operations of the NKVD. Drawing on genocide studies, the author examines mechanisms and targets of state-run mass media propaganda on the eve of national operations of the NKVD against Soviet Nordic minorities. Kotljarchuk argues that the media campaign of hatred was orchestrated from Moscow, and often the local newspapers just reprinted materials from the central press. However, in many other cases contents were adapted for local circumstances. The propagandist preparation of the national operations included two main phases. The first phase concerned the conceptualisation of state-run mass violence against certain minorities, and the second was the translation of the propaganda of hatred to broad layers of the population. Through propaganda, the population and local authorities were prepared for subsequent ethnic cleansing. Unlike in urban areas, hiding the knowledge of mass arrests in ethnic borderlands was not possible, and the exact number of arrested people became known to the local community the very next day. Soviet propaganda campaigns during the national operations of the NKVD are an example of what we today call *fake news*—attempts at creating a reality out of nothing.

In Chapter 5, “Nation-building by terror in Soviet Georgia, 1937–1938,” Marc Junge and Daniel Müller look at the factors that accelerated the national operations of the NKVD through the prism of persisting inter-ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus. Based on newly obtained access to archival material in Georgia, it is possible to reconstruct “which ethnic groups suffered the most in the Great Terror in absolute and relative terms.” The chapter analyses the nature of national operations in Soviet Georgia in terms of ethnic conflicts. Specific Georgian, as opposed to general all-Union, interests seem to be an indispensable basis for understanding the mass operations in Georgia, but

admittedly these interests explain only part of the deadly dynamics involved, especially concerning the diaspora nationalities. The authors show how the Georgian leadership used the national operations in order to marginalize and diminish ethnic minorities, especially in Abkhazia.

The ethnic issue is also highlighted in Chapter 6 by Eva Toulouze titled “A long great ethnic terror in the Volga region. A rehearsal for the Great Terror.” Toulouze notes that ethnicity was not at the core of the Marxist understanding of society. But for the Bolsheviks, inheriting a multi-ethnic empire, various ethnicities were a reality that they had to deal with, and Lenin took particular interest in the questions of ethnicity. In the 1920s the Soviet nationality policy was characterised by a striving for *korenizatsiya* [‘indigenisation’] in which non-Russian populations were supposed to be actively involved in building a socialist society on their own specific terms. Ethnic cultures were encouraged under the Stalinist slogan that they should be “national [i.e. ethnic] in form, socialist in content.” Toulouze’s study of the destiny of the intelligentsias of Finno-Ugric descent in the Volga region shows that the encouraging attitudes toward ethnic culture changed by the end of the 1920s in favour of the unity of Soviet culture (modelled after Russian culture). The author concludes that the repression that struck Finno-Ugric (communist) intellectuals during the first half of the 1930s was not primarily motivated by the fact that the Finno-Ugric peoples had sister nations outside the Soviet Union (Finland and Hungary), even though loyalty to purportedly hostile foreign nations was used in the (paranoiac) accusations against individuals and organisations. Rather, what the Stalinist regime really feared was nationality/ethnicity as such, and the purpose of the terror was to control and subjugate local nationalism and ethnic loyalty. Toulouze suggests that the repression of the Finno-Ugric intelligentsia was a foreboding of the Great Terror. In essence it was a rehearsal of the same logic, methods, and tactics that would be used in the purges of 1937–1938 and that had already been tested during the collectivisation and dekulakisation campaigns.

Oksana Beznosova, in Chapter 7 on the fate of Ukrainian Evangelists (Baptists, Evangelical Christians, Pentecostals, Adventists, and Mennonites) between 1928 and 1939, compares the Communist Party to a totalitarian religion with the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory as its doctrine. In that perspective, the NKVD played the role of a “Holy Inquisition” in the fight against “heretics” that potentially could compete with the hegemony of the Party. Beznosova shows that repression of Evangelism in Ukraine, in the form of arrests of pastors and preachers, peaked in 1930, 1932–1933, 1935

and, above all, in 1937–1938. The peaks can be connected to certain Party decrees and resolutions sharpening the anti-religious policy of the state. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast²—the province which in the 1930s was the main centre for Evangelism in the Ukrainian SSR—all legal, registered Evangelical congregations had been disbanded by the time of the Second World War. This happened due to repression in the form of administrative measures, high taxation, and, not least, mass arrests and executions of “cult leaders.” Beznosova emphasizes, however, that the full extent of how repressions struck ordinary members of the Evangelical denominations during the Great Terror is still unknown due to the fact that people were not officially arrested on charges of religious belonging.

It is not self-evident what should be defined as “repression” or not. The intentions behind a certain measure taken by authorities might be the opposite of repressive acts, but the outcome, in its entirety or in parts, can still become repressive, at least from some points of view. In the case of the so-called culture bases in the Soviet North, which Eva Toulouze, Laur Vallikivi, and Art Leete treat in Chapter 8, it is one thing what the planners of these bases had in mind, another how the actual bases worked in each individual case, and yet another how the recipients—the northern indigenous minorities—reacted towards them. Culture bases were a form of missionary stations for the new Soviet ideology and administration with the aim of reaching the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the Soviet North. From the start in the late 1920s, these bases were supposed to bring culture, schooling, health-care, and infrastructure to the “backward” peoples inhabiting the vast taigas and tundras of Northern Russia, Siberia, and the Far East. The vision was to emancipate the natives from both external exploitation (traders) and internal inequalities (between men and women, rich and poor, old and young) and make them the “agents of their own fate,” as the authors put it. Being among the very few Soviet outposts on the northern frontier in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the culture bases also had the responsibility to administrate dekulakisation, class struggle, and the fight against shamans, which led to disfranchisement and exclusion of precisely those persons in the indigenous communities that had the highest internal authority and prestige. To the indigenous peoples, it was obvious that the culture and reforms that the culture bases and their schools tried to implement were based on Russian norms and values, which often collided with

² Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and the city of Dnipropetrovsk were recently renamed Dnipro Oblast and Dnipro. In this book, we use the Soviet Ukrainian names of the region and the city.

indigenous traditions and world-views. This sometimes led to violent resistance from the indigenous populations, as in the so-called Kazym uprising among a group of Khanty and Nenets, which in turn resulted in repressive retaliation from Soviet authorities.

The uncertainty regarding the extent to which people were arrested because of religious belonging that Beznosova emphasizes is also noted by Tatiana Bulgakova and Olle Sundström concerning the repression of shamans in the Soviet Far East in Chapter 9. Shamanism in many respects flourished among the indigenous peoples of the North in the beginning of the Soviet era, when the Russian Orthodox Church—which before the revolution had combatted shamanism—was forced to withdraw due to the anti-church measures taken by the revolutionaries. Only towards the end of the 1920s was shamanism highlighted as a “religion” or “religious cult”—and hence shamans and shamanism became caught up in the general Soviet struggle against religion. Written sources and archival documents of the time, as well as oral sources from late- and post-Soviet times, present a rather complex situation. Officially, the struggle against shamanism was supposed to be completed through propaganda, enlightenment, education, and a general development plan for these purportedly “backward” and “primitive” peoples. Between 1926 and 1936, putative “shamans,” together with “kulaks,” were constitutionally excluded from participating in local councils and in decision-making. The official attitudes towards shamans and shamanism at times led to general harassment of shamans, and expropriation and destruction of drums and other ritual objects connected to their activities were common. On the local level, this repression seems to have been carried out by newly “converted” indigenous communists, members of the Komsomol. Because being a shaman or practicing shamanism was not an official accusation in court files, it is impossible to assess how many people were arrested or executed on such grounds in the Far East. But the study of both archival materials and later oral sources indicates that while arrest was a constant and implicit threat to shamans, few were actually brought up on legal charges. The many complaints to authorities that shamans were performing their rituals in the open, both before and after the Second World War, speak for that.

While Bulgakova and Sundström try to trace how Soviet authorities and communist zealots concretely repressed shamanism in light of the overall struggle against religion, Yana Ivashchenko, in Chapter 10, addresses the more direct question of why shamanism in the Soviet Far East had all but disappeared by the 1970s (which she concludes that it had). Was it the communists’ education and propaganda campaigns that turned peoples’ minds

away from the traditional world-view and rituals? Or was it the Soviet modernisation, socio-economic reconstruction, and health-care that made the shamans and their services unnecessary and obsolete? Or was it perhaps arrests and violent purges that reduced the number of shamans—those who knew the traditional world-view system and rituals and would have been capable of transferring the tradition to the next generation—and intimidated others from continuing shamanic practices? Ivashchenko bases her study mainly on her own fieldwork among indigenous peoples in the Lower Amur region. Even though there was a ban on the practice of shamanism, and despite the fact that participants were threatened with arrest for participating in shamanic activities, none of Ivashchenko's informants could recall that anyone was ever arrested or deported due to shamanism. Gradually, shamanism became stigmatized and unpopular among the indigenous peoples during the Soviet era. These attitudes were, of course, intentionally disseminated by the Soviet regime. But Ivashchenko suggests that the main reason why shamanism died off was the internal processes of desacralisation and rationalisation of knowledge among the indigenous peoples themselves—processes that started with the indigenous peoples' contacts with other cultures already in the nineteenth century.

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Illustration 1 (next page): Map of the nationalities of the Soviet Union. From *Geograficheskiy atlas dlya sredney shkoly*, Moskva: Glavnoe Upravlenie Geodezii i Kartografii pri SNK SSSR (1941).

