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# “Agitators and Spies”: The Enemy Image of Itinerant Russians in the Grand Duchy of Finland, 1899–1900

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Johanna Wassholm

## **Abstract**

This chapter investigates the enemy image of itinerant Russians created in the Finnish press in 1899–1900, after the issuing of the February Manifesto, which according to Finnish constitutional thought revoked the autonomous status of the Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire. It illuminates the political context in which the image emerged, the mechanisms through which it was constructed, the recommended measures to counter the perceived enemy, and how the image was reproduced in later historiography. The sources consist of Finnish newspapers and the resistance writings of the Finnish constitutionalist underground press, which have previously not been noted in research on the topic. The analysis shows that the enemy image, including a proposed boycott of all things Russian, was a central element in the constitutionalist strategy of passive resistance. More generally, it reveals how political conflict can affect relations between a sedentary majority population and itinerant groups from the outside, and the mechanisms through which seemingly peaceful transnational activities and relations can easily become politicized in times of conflict.

## Introduction

In March 1899, the Finnish press alleged that Russian agitators, supported by nationalist circles in Russia aiming to undermine local society, were flooding into the Grand Duchy of Finland. The accusations targeted all itinerant Russians and surfaced shortly after the Finnish Senate promulgated the Russian February Manifesto,<sup>1</sup> which, according to many Finns, revoked the autonomous status of the Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. The manifesto started a period that Finnish national historiography would in retrospect name the first period of “oppression” or “russification,” and which would last until 1905. The roots of the conflict can be traced back to the 1860s, when the idea of Finland as a state of its own, although within the Russian Empire, was formed. This idea clashed with growing nationalist sentiment in Russia, which began to question the Grand Duchy’s autonomy and viewed Finland—with its own internal jurisdiction, Diet, central administration, and budget—as a “separatist” entity that threatened the empire’s unity.<sup>2</sup> Similar tensions between Russian imperial interests and the interests of the empire’s semi-autonomous borderlands were typical for the time, and they resulted in attempts from the side of the central administration to unify the empire.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I investigate the enemy image of itinerant Russians that was created and reproduced in the Finnish press in the years 1899 and 1900, following the issuing of the February Manifesto. I describe the political context in which the image emerged and analyze how it was constructed. More specifically, I examine how the alleged enemy’s hostile character and subversive agenda were portrayed, and the practical measures that newspaper writers recommended should be taken in “defense” of the Finnish nation and its independent status

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1 “Hans Kejslerliga Majestäts Nådiga Manifest, gifvet i St. Petersburg, den 3/15 Februari 1899,” in *Storfurstendömet Finlands författnings-samling för 1899* (Helsingfors: Kejslerliga senatens tryckeri, 1900).

2 Leonard C. Lundin, “Finland,” in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 382–98; Osmo Jussila, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2004), 270–83; Juhani Mylly, *Kansallinen projekti. Historiankirjoitus ja politiikka autonomisessa Suomessa* (Turku: Kirja-Aurora, 2002), 208–19.

3 On the process in the imperial context, see, for example, Alexei Miller, “The Romanov Empire and the Russian Nation,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015); as for Finland and the Baltic provinces, see Edward C. Thaden, ed., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Gert von Pistohlkors, “‘Russifizierung’ in den Baltischen Provinzen und in Finnland,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* 33, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 33 (1984): 592–606.

in relation to the Russian Empire. In the last section, I investigate how the enemy image created around 1900 was reproduced and interpreted in Finnish historiography. The aim is to illuminate the motives and mechanisms underlying the construction of the enemy image and its short- and long-term consequences for those who were portrayed as enemies. The chapter also contributes new knowledge concerning how people pursuing an itinerant lifestyle can easily become suspect in times of political distress, and more generally concerning attitudes toward Russians in Finland around 1900.

My theoretical point of departure is the concept of enemy image, defined as a stereotypical negative evaluation of “the other.” The image emanates from a perception of the unfamiliar or strange and is utilized to evoke negative emotions and attitudes such as fear, aversion, aggression, and hate.<sup>4</sup> “The other,” be it a nation, group, or individual, is condemned or denounced for refusing to respect the essential values of the “threatened” group. Not only is the enemy accused of unfriendliness but, more importantly, of malicious and hostile intentions, including an ambition to harm, destroy, and stir unrest.<sup>5</sup> Another point of departure is that itinerant lifestyles have commonly been perceived as a threat to sedentary societies throughout history.<sup>6</sup> This has been especially evident in times of unrest and conflict, as itinerant people have been suspected of spreading harmful ideas and diseases, or of being agents or spies in the service of hostile foreign powers.<sup>7</sup>

The conflict surrounding itinerant Russians in Finland around 1900 has been studied to some extent, although not from the perspective of enemy images and mobility. Previous research has mainly focused on the events evolving in the spring of 1899, when the conflict peaked, although the conflict remained on the political agenda in the subsequent years. Päiviö Tommila deals with the topic in a chapter in his extensive book on the Great Petition of 1899, and it is also addressed in research on the crofter question in Finland. In this context, the

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4 Kurt R. Spillmann and Kati Spillmann, “Some Sociobiological and Psychological Aspects of ‘Images of the Enemy,’” in *Enemy Images in American History*, ed. Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl (Providence: Berghahn, 1997), 5–11.

5 Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase, “Introduction,” in *Enemy Images in American History*, ed. Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl (Providence: Berghahn, 1997), 2–3; William Eckhart, “Making and Breaking Enemy Images,” *Peace Research* 21, no. 4 (1989): 11–12.

6 Antti Häkkinen, “Kiertäminen, kulkeminen ja muukalaisuuden kohtaaminen 1800-luvun lopun ja 1900-luvun alun maalaisyhteisöissä,” in *Vieraat kulkijat—tutut talot. Näkökulmia etnisyyden ja köyhyyden historiaan Suomessa*, ed. Antti Häkkinen et al. (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2005), 226–27.

7 Tuula Rekola, “Romernas tidiga skeden i Finland: från 1500-talet till mitten av 1800-talet,” in *De finska romernas historia från svenska tiden till 2000-talet*, ed. Panu Pulma (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2015), 23.

focus is on the rumors about land distribution that peddlers and other itinerant Russians were accused of spreading.<sup>8</sup>

The topic also features in research on peddlers from other parts of the Russian Empire, who played a prominent role in mobile trade in the Grand Duchy, with their number increasing in the last decades of the nineteenth century with growing consumption and improved communications. Not least, regular steamship routes along the Finnish coast and the expansion of the railway network, which in 1870 connected Finland to St. Petersburg, contributed to their growing numbers.<sup>9</sup> The most numerous group of peddlers were Russian Karelians from the Arkhangelsk and Olonets Governorates, commonly known as “Rucksack Russians” or “Arkhangelites” in Finland.<sup>10</sup> Other major groups included Muslim Tatars, mainly from the region of Nizhny Novgorod, who had emerged as itinerant traders in Finland in the 1870s, and bristle collectors from the Tver and Pskov Governorates.<sup>11</sup> While peddlers from various parts of the empire were a common sight in the Grand Duchy, their legal status was somewhat opaque. Finland had its own internal legislation, and the Finnish Trade Act of 1879 only allowed peddling for persons with citizenship rights in the Grand Duchy. As most peddlers from the outside lacked such, they were formally forbidden to peddle. In previous decades, however, their formally illicit trade had generally been ignored by the Finnish authorities, and they were popular with their customers.<sup>12</sup>

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- 8 Päiviö Tommila, *Suuri adressi* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1999), 245–56; Viljo Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys vuoteen 1909. Yhteiskuntahistoriallinen tutkimus* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1961), 180–91; Matti Peltonen, *Talolliset ja torpparit: vuosisadan vaihteen maatalouskysymys* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1992), 257–65; Sami Suodenjoki, “Land Agitation and the Rise of Agrarian Socialism in South-Western Finland, 1899–1907,” in *Labour Unions and Politics under the North Star: The Nordic Countries, 1700–2000*, ed. Mary Hilson et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 175–80.
- 9 Johanna Wassholm, “Tatar Pedlars in the Grand Duchy of Finland in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 8, no. 2 (2020): 13–14.
- 10 On the Russian Karelian peddlers in the conflict, see Mervi Naakka–Korhonen, *Halpa hinta, pitkä mitta* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1988), 46–53; Pekka Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin. Itäkarjalaisten liiketoimintaa Suomessa* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2016), 101–03, 108–14.
- 11 Wassholm, “Tatar Pedlars,” 13–14; Aulis J. Alanen, *Suomen maakaupan historia* (Helsinki: Kauppiaitten kustannus, 1957), 187–88; Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin*, 21–22. The bristle collectors exchanged their trinkets for horsehair and hog bristles, which they sold to broom factories in Russia.
- 12 Naakka–Korhonen, *Halpa hinta*, 177–81; Johanna Wassholm and Anna Sundelin, “Emotions, Trading Practices and Communication in Transnational Itinerant Trade: Encounters between ‘Rucksack Russians’ and their Customers in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Finland,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 66, no. 2 (2018): 133.

The analyzed sources mainly comprise articles in the Finnish press dealing with mobile Russians. Newspapers are relevant sources for examining enemy images, as they played an important role in shaping public opinion in the nineteenth century and, therefore, in disseminating enemy images.<sup>13</sup> The newspapers have been accessed through the Finnish National Library’s digitized newspaper archive, which also contains publications by the clandestine resistance press of the Finnish underground opposition.<sup>14</sup> The underground press evolved in the autumn of 1900, after censorship temporarily or permanently suspended several constitutional newspapers. The resistance writings, which also include clandestinely distributed pamphlets and brochures, have rarely been noted in previous research on the conflict, although Steven Duncan Huxley, in his doctoral dissertation on Finnish passive resistance, states that they reveal a “more or less fanatical concern with the Russian peddlers.”<sup>15</sup> The main and longest-lived underground newspaper was *Fria Ord* (Free Words), published in Stockholm from September 1900, as the informal continuation of the suspended constitutional mouthpiece *Nya Pressen*.<sup>16</sup> In the last chapter, I examine works of history in order to illuminate how the enemy image of mobile Russians was reproduced and interpreted in later Finnish history writing.

## Enemy on the Move

According to Finnish constitutional thought, the February Manifesto of 1899 formally revoked the autonomy that Alexander I had granted the Finns in 1809, when Finland was transformed from an integral part of the Swedish realm into a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire.<sup>17</sup> The manifesto was met with broad

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13 Fiebig-von Hase, “Introduction,” 14; Laura Stark, *The Limits of Patriarchy: How Female Networks of Pilfering and Gossip sparked the First Debates on Rural Gender Rights in the 19th-Century Finnish-language Press* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011), 40–42.

14 The digitized newspapers of the Finnish National Library: <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/search>.

15 Steven Duncan Huxley, *Constitutionalist Insurgency in Finland: Finnish ‘Passive Resistance’ against Russification as a Case of Nonmilitary Struggle in the European Resistance Tradition* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1990), 169. Censorship was an important tool in Governor-General Bobrikov’s russification program in Finland.

16 Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen, “Kasvava sanomalehdistö sensuurin kahleissa 1890–1905,” in *Suomen lehdistön historia 1: Sanomalehdistön vaiheet vuoteen 1905*, ed. Päiviö Tommila et al. (Kuopio: Kustannuskiila, 1988), 550–52. *Fria Ord* was published four to six times weekly until 1905. The publication (circulation 2,500 copies) was financed by subscription fees.

17 The idea that Finland had become a state of its own in 1809 was a national construct cemented in the 1860s. In recent modern historiography it is viewed as myth. See, for example, Jussila, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta*, 270–71.

discontent in Finland, immediately evoking strong anti-Russian sentiment. Within weeks, the press reported that Russians with malicious intentions had been observed roaming around the Grand Duchy. The suspects included a variety of itinerant persons, such as knife grinders, castrators, rag and bristle collectors, and ice-cream sellers.<sup>18</sup> The prime suspects were peddlers, the most numerous and therefore most visible group of itinerant Russians that Finns encountered in their everyday life.<sup>19</sup>

The press mainly accused itinerant Russians of two offenses. First, they were allegedly spreading unfounded and subversive rumors about land division in rural regions, seeking to convince the landless population that land was to be confiscated from landowners and given to them.<sup>20</sup> Building on the Russian *mir*—a Russian system of communal land ownership of village land—similar rumors in various forms had circulated in the Russian Empire, including Finland, throughout the nineteenth century. The rumors often emerged in conjunction with heated debates about crofters and landownership, a question that was highly topical in Finland in the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The Russian imperial bureaucracy had also exploited rumors on land division in attempts to deepen the split between the elites and the peasants in its borderlands. In Poland, for example, rumors stating that the peasants would receive land from the emperor were strategically utilized as a means to marginalize the local elite, the *szlachta*, from the Polish nation-building process.<sup>22</sup>

Second, itinerant Russians were accused of collecting signatures for a petition of some sort, usually depicted as a countermeasure to the Great Petition, which had been collected in Finland in March in defense of autonomy.<sup>23</sup> This allegedly “false” counter-petition, the press asserted, was to be sent to high-ranking

18 See, for example, *Kansalainen* (January 13, 1899), 2; *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Uusi Savo* (April 13, 1899), 2; *Wiborgsbladet* (April 16, 1899), 2; *Wiborgs Nyheter* (April 17, 1899), 2.

19 Johanna Wassholm and Ann-Catrin Östman, “Introduktion. Plats och praktiker i handelsmöten i Finland 1850–1950,” in *Att mötas kring varor. Plats och praktiker i handelsmöten i Finland 1850–1950*, ed. Johanna Wassholm and Ann-Catrin Östman (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland & Stockholm: Appell Förlag, 2021), 10.

20 See, for example, Valfrid Spångberg, *Statskuppen i Finland 1899*. *Ur det moderna samhällslivet 19* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1899), 122–24; *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2.

21 Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 247–48; Sami Suodenjoki, *Kuriton suutari ja kiistämisen rajat. Työväenliikkeen läpimurto hämäläisessä maalaisyhteisössä 1899–1909* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010), 97. On such rumors in the 1890s, see, for example, *Tampereen Sanomat* (September 29, 1895), 2.

22 Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism: Essays in the Methodology of Historical Research* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 327.

23 Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 248–49. The allegations were partly presented by Finns who were collecting signatures for the Great Petition.

officials in the empire’s machinery of power, and possibly Tsar Nicholas II in person. Its aim was to afford an illusory impression of political sentiments in Finland.<sup>24</sup>

By extension, such allegations were linked to accusations of mobile Russians falsely trying to convince people that “Russian law” would be enforced in the Grand Duchy; this was something for the Finns to rejoice about, since they would no longer have to suffer heavy taxes and other “burdens.”<sup>25</sup> In some of the more sensational versions of the rumors, the Russians allegedly asserted that all Finnish county police officers would be executed, or that those who had signed the Great Petition would be exiled to Siberia.<sup>26</sup>

The general unrest in the spring of 1899 alarmed both the Finnish and Russian authorities. The Finnish Senate, on the one hand, ordered the regional governors to investigate whether there was any truth to the allegations.<sup>27</sup> Russian peddlers and industrialists, on the other hand, complained about being persecuted in the Grand Duchy. In petitions sent to Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov, they pleaded for him to make peddling legal for all imperial subjects in Finland. Bobrikov ordered the Senate to renew the legislation on migrant trade on short notice. When it refused, on the grounds that this could only be done in connection with a complete reform of the Trade Act of 1879, Bobrikov referred the matter to the Russian legislative apparatus.<sup>28</sup> The Ordinance on Migrant Trade, which made all imperial subjects equal to Finnish citizens with regard to itinerant livelihoods, was issued on July 2, 1900.<sup>29</sup> Around the same time, two other Russian ordinances were passed: the Language Manifesto, which sought to strengthen the role of the Russian language in Finland, and an ordinance that limited the freedom of assembly. All three conflicted with Finnish law and were perceived as severe threats to Finnish autonomy.

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24 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Wasa Nyheter* (May 7, 1899), 3; *Wasabladet* (April 11, 1899), 2.

25 *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2. On the rumors concerning Russian law, see Hannu Immonen, “Kun Venäjän laki tulee,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 90, no. 2 (1992): 117–28.

26 *Österbottningen* (March 28, 1899), 2; *Åland* (April 5, 1899), 2.

27 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1. See also Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 245.

28 Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 171; Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 255–56.

29 “Hans Kejslerliga Majestäts Nådiga Förordning om handels idkande af ryska infödingar. Gifven i Helsingfors, den 2 Juli 1900,” in *Storfurstendömet Finlands författnings-samling för 1900* (Helsingfors: Kejslerliga senatens tryckeri, 1901).



## Constructing the Enemy Image

The enemy image that the press created of mobile Russians portrayed them as a collective external threat to the unity of the Finnish nation. Essentially, they were perceived as “foreigners” and “suspect figures,” engaged in a shady mission to divide and destroy it.<sup>30</sup> In this, they were said to act on behalf of a “subversive band” of “foreign nationality,” commonly assumed to be Governor-General Bobrikov and his regime.<sup>31</sup> Bobrikov, in turn, was allegedly backed by nationalist “secret powers” in Russia that incited and supported his agenda of thwarting Finnish autonomy.<sup>32</sup>

The press offered no evidence of the identity of these shadow powers but did make assumptions about them. One alleged culprit was the Slavic Committee (slaviska kommittén, slaavilainen komitea), referred to as a politically influential Russian “Patriot League.” The committee had appointed a section to deal with the “Finnish question” shortly before the issuing of the February Manifesto. Its secretary was M. M. Borodkin, recognized as the author of the “Finnish correspondence” in the Russian newspaper *Novoe Vremia*,<sup>33</sup> which was infamously hostile to the “separatist” tendencies of the Grand Duchy.<sup>34</sup> Another suspect was the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, K. P. Pobedonostsev, one of the prime ideologues of Russian autocracy.<sup>35</sup>

Further suspicions were raised toward P. I. Messarosh, known as a “Finland-hater” and an avid supporter of Bobrikov’s Russification measures. Messarosh had been a correspondent for the *Moskovskie Vedomosti* in Finland since 1897 and served as an informer for Bobrikov. After the Finnish press revealed his identity in March 1899, the hate toward him grew so strong that he was forced to leave Finland in the spring of 1900.<sup>36</sup> The connections between these secretive political forces and the itinerant Russians who acted on their behalf in Finland

30 See, for example, *Wasa Nyheter* (May 7, 1899), 3; *Wasabladet* (April 11, 1899), 2; *Vestra Nyland* (April 21, 1899), 2; *Kristinestads Tidning* (September 29, 1900), 2.

31 See, for example, *Åbo Tidning* (March 14, 1899), 1; *Kotka Nyheter* (March 18, 1899, 3) *Laatokka* (April 4, 1899), 2. See also Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 248–49; Naakka-Korhonen, *Halpa hinta*, 46.

32 [Elis Furuohjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar* (Stockholm: K. B. Boströms Boktryckeri, 1901), 2–3.

33 *Nya Pressen* (February 1, 1899), 3; (February 14, 1899), 3. See also, Eino Parmanen, *Taistelujen kirja. Kuvauksia itsenäisyystaistelumme vaiheista. I Osa: Routakauden puhkeaminen ja sen ensimmäiset vuodet* (Porvoo et al.: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1936), 264–65.

34 Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland*, 26, 28, 30.

35 [Furuohjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar*, 6; *Aftonbladet* (August 18, 1900), 2. On Pobedonostsev, see Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland*, 10.

36 Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 252–53.

were often depicted as indirect, indicating the existence of middlemen—for example, Russian gendarmes or shopkeepers residing in Finland. The author of an article in the newspaper *Wasabladet* claimed in April 1899 that one Russian peddler had allegedly confessed to having received orders from “some gendarme,” who in turn worked on commands from above.<sup>37</sup>

The press described itinerant Russians as hostile agitators, instigators, and spies, allegedly acting on someone else’s orders.<sup>38</sup> This is reflected in how they were portrayed as sneaking around on side roads, hiding in forests, and swiftly disappearing when approached by the police.<sup>39</sup> The fact that they appeared to be avoiding the authorities supported the allegations of their enmity and malicious intent, a central building block in the creation of enemy images.<sup>40</sup> The mole, an animal primarily living underground, offered an apt metaphor to represent the Russians’ shady and hostile mission to undermine Finnish society; in the spring of 1899, Finnish newspapers published numerous articles titled “mole work.”<sup>41</sup>

The enemy image was further strengthened with other negatively charged metaphors, portraying mobile Russians as “wretched creatures,” “pushy parasites,” or “harmful weeds.”<sup>42</sup> They were also linked with dirt, being collectively described as a “filthy sewer” that was “contaminating” Finnish society.<sup>43</sup> The association with dirt follows a stereotypical pattern of the late nineteenth century, used in depictions of “the other” with the aim to justify exclusionary practices.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, they were accused of selling harmful substances, such as poison, and spreading pestilence, not least venereal diseases.<sup>45</sup> Although such

37 *Wasa Nyheter* (April 6, 1899), 3.

38 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Wasa Nyheter* (May 7, 1899), 3.

39 See, for example, *Wasa Nyheter* (May 7, 1899), 3; *Wasabladet* (April 11, 1899), 2; *Vestra Nyland* (April 21, 1899), 2; *Kristinestads Tidning* (September 29, 1900), 2.

40 Fiebig-von Hase, introduction, 2–3; Eckhart; “Making and Breaking Enemy Images,” 11–12.

41 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Kristinestads Tidning* (September 29, 1900), 2. Swedish “Mullvadsarbete”; Finnish “Myyrän työ.” See also Spångberg, *Statskuppen*, 122. The mole metaphor already figured in the Finnish press before 1899; see, for example, *Wiborgs Tidning* (March 7, 1868), 1; *Tammerfors* (February 1, 1896), 3. See also Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin*, 111.

42 *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Kotkan Utiset* (April 23, 1899), 1.

43 *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2.

44 Häkkinen, “Kiertäminen, kulkeminen,” 226–27; Adeline Masquelier, “Dirt, Undress, and Difference: An Introduction,” in *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body’s Surface*, ed. Adeline Masquelier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6–7. See also Wassholm, “Tatar Pedlars,” 19–20.

45 *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Wiborgs Nyheter* (June 1, 1899), 2; *Finliandskaia Gazeta* (April 20 [May 3 according to the Gregorian calendar], 1900), 2.

allegations have been commonly directed toward mobile people throughout history, the political tensions around the turn of the century made the rhetoric more explicit. The Finnish nation was pictured as a living organism that needed to defend itself to survive. In accordance with the laws of nature, an organism that could not rid itself of something harmful and destructive that was invading its body was doomed.<sup>46</sup>

The aim of the subversive mission was described rather vaguely. On a general level, it centered around the idea that the mobile Russians were seeking to stir unrest in Finnish society by agitating its lower classes to revolt against the elite. Their means to reach this goal was to spread disinformation, which distorted the sense of justice and truth of the common people. In connection with the collecting of signatures for the secretive petition, itinerant Russians were accused of using a variety of deceptive methods to get people to sign. For instance, they would interrogate people in a village about the names of absent persons and record their names in their notebooks, or ask people to write their names with the explanation that they wanted to learn to spell Finnish names.<sup>47</sup> In a story that appears particularly imaginative, a Russian chimney sweep insisted that he could offer his services free of charge because the Emperor guaranteed him a high salary; he urged villagers who wished to have their chimney swept for free to sign his “sweeping book.”<sup>48</sup> The Russian newspaper *Moskovskie Vedomosti* features an intriguing insight into how the rumors on signature collecting could arise. The article describes a Tatar peddler’s encounter with two local men on the streets of Helsinki, who offered to sell him fox furs. The Tatar asked them to write down their address in his notebook so that he could later collect the furs from their homes; this led an aggressive passer-by to confront the peddler, accusing him of collecting signatures for a deceitful petition.<sup>49</sup>

The Finnish press commonly accused the “Russian spies” of targeting the most “defenseless” in society: the uneducated, easy to deceive, and children. In one such depiction, two peddlers follow a young schoolgirl, interrogating her about what she is learning in class. The girl refuses to answer but the peddlers encourage her to write something on a piece of paper.<sup>50</sup> In another story, a young boy tears up a paper, angrily reprimanding a Tatar who had promised him ten

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46 Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 10–12.

47 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1; *Wasa Nyheter* (May 7, 1899), 3; *Tampereen Sanomat* (April 11, 1899), 3.

48 *Wasa Nyheter* (April 6, 1899), 3.

49 *Moskovskie Vedomosti* 1900, no. 272.

50 *Vestra Nyland* (April 21, 1899), 2. See also *Tampereen Sanomat* (April 11, 1899), 3; *Wiborgs Nyheter* (April 22, 1899), 3.

pennies for his signature.<sup>51</sup> Many similar stories end in the same way, with the people seeing through the mobile Russians attempts to deceive or bribe. These obviously served as a normative model for how all Finns should act when approached by an “enemy” with questionable objectives.

In 1899 and early 1900, the Finnish press described in a rather vague manner the political objective of the enemy, who allegedly threatened the unity of the nation. The press mainly sought to raise awareness of the fact that mobile Russians were seeking to stir unrest in Finnish society by spreading rumors about land division and the implementation of “Russian law,” and that they were collecting signatures for a petition that was meant to present a false view of the political sentiment in Finland regarding the imperial bureaucracy. In the underground resistance writings that were published from the fall of 1900, the political objectives were formulated more explicitly. Resistance writers claimed that the ultimate objective of the secretive mission was the complete destruction of everything that the Finns had held sacred since time immemorial: their religion, their language, and the social system inherited from their ancestors.<sup>52</sup> The mobile Russians were now portrayed as a tool in the Russian nationalists’ plan to Russify Finland by slowly replacing the Lutheran faith with the Orthodox one and by founding Russian language schools.

In this context, recent developments in the Baltic provinces were presented as a warning example. Resistance writers drew parallels with the Baltic provinces, claiming that a similar strategy had already succeeded there. Allegedly, Russian peddlers had managed to drive local merchants out of business with the support of Russian nationalists. Having settled down permanently as shopkeepers, the former peddlers had in turn prepared the ground for more Russians to settle in the provinces. The same was said to be the goal in Finland: after settling down, the Russian shopkeepers would bring their families and employ more people from their home region. Eventually, the Russians would be so numerous that they would require Orthodox churches and Russian language schools to be established.<sup>53</sup>

51 *Kristinestads Tidning* (September 29, 1900), 2. See also *Kotkan Uutiset* (April 23, 1899), 1.

52 [Furuhjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar*, 2.

53 *Aftonbladet* (August 18, 1900), 2; Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 11–12. References to Livonia were also made in 1899. See, for example, *Uusi Savo* (April 13, 1899), 2; *Wiipurin Sanomat* (April 17, 1899), 1. On russification measures in the Baltic provinces, see Edward C. Thaden, “The Russian Government,” in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 33–75.

## Practical Measures to Counter the Enemy

The enemy image as such was not the ultimate goal of those who had a political motive to construct it. Its practical function was to incite the Finnish nation as a collective to counter the threat that itinerant Russians allegedly posed. Measures in this direction were to be taken in every sphere of Finnish society: in national politics, by the local authorities, by civil society (including the press), and, by every individual. In a circular that the regional authorities in Uusimaa sent out in April 1899, it was stressed that no measures to counter the enemy would succeed without the support of the Finnish people as a unified whole.<sup>54</sup>

The first concrete measures to counter the “enemy” were taken in April 1899, when the regional governors received an order from the Finnish Senate to investigate the reported agitation. The governors sent a circular to the rural police, who, to gather information, detained and interrogated itinerant Russians suspected of engaging in illicit trade or spreading subversive rumors.<sup>55</sup> The local authorities also took measures which were in line with a paragraph in a new law on local government, issued in early 1899, that strengthened the local administration’s responsibilities for order and security. According to Nevalainen, the most common measure, taken in at least eighty-eight municipalities, was to offer monetary rewards to people who denounced Russian peddlers to the authorities. The municipality of Virrat even petitioned the governor to hire an extra police officer, whose sole task would be to curb illicit peddling and control potential agitators.<sup>56</sup> Notices encouraging readers to denounce peddlers were published in the newspapers.<sup>57</sup> The reward system provoked especially negative reactions in the Russian press, not least as the money was to be taken from funds normally used to reimburse people for killing harmful animals to protect harvests and people. In this context, Russian peddlers were metaphorically likened to predators and vultures.<sup>58</sup>

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54 *Vestra Nyland* (April 14, 1899), 2.

55 Detainments are noted in short paragraphs in the newspapers. See, for example, *Kansalainen* (March 31, 1899), 2; *Wasabladet* (April 11, 1899), 2; *Vestra Nyland* (April 14, 1899), 2; *Wiborgsbladet* (April 16, 1899), 2. Nevalainen estimates that at least fifty-four Russian peddlers were detained in the spring of 1899. Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin*, 103.

56 Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin*, 102–3. See also, Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 252; Alanen, *Suomen maakaupan historia*, 456–57.

57 See, for example, *Laatokka* (April 5, 1899), 2; *Karjalatar* (April 29, 1899), 2.

58 *Finliandskaia Gazeta* (April 20 [May 3 according to the Gregorian calendar], 1900), 2. Such rhetoric had already been used in the 1860s when the Finnish press depicted Russian peddlers as dangerous wolves. Nevalainen, *Kulkukauppiasta kauppaneuvoksiin*, 111.

Measures were also taken to correct the presumed disinformation spread by the “agitators”—in other words, to raise awareness of the perils Finland faced. The main responsibility for this rested with the nation’s educated elite, including civil servants and students, supported by the press. Newspapers across the political map published articles that corrected misunderstandings of the *mir* and *obshchina* institutions.<sup>59</sup> In the summer of 1899, the same students who a few months earlier had collected signatures for the Great Petition returned to the villages to give talks intended to correct potential misunderstandings.<sup>60</sup> Priests were urged to read proclamations from the authorities to their congregations, warning people against believing in untruthful promises spread by “Arkangelites and other persons of Russian origin.”<sup>61</sup> To achieve maximum results, warning signs were to be distributed. Some newspapers even featured a warning text that could be cut out and hung on the walls of administrative buildings and other visible places.<sup>62</sup>

After the ordinance that legalized peddling for Russian subjects came into force in July 1900, the police could no longer detain Russian subjects on suspicion of illegal trade. However, suspicions were now raised on other grounds and detainments were occasionally made under the pretext that peddlers lacked proper documentation or traded in forbidden goods. Finnish newspapers occasionally reported such detainments well into the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> Without the possibility to use a legal weapon, the struggle now took an even more ideological and programmatic turn, which underlined the role of patriotic sentiment and collective responsibility. The underground resistance writings (for example, a brochure by constitutional leader Victor Magnus von Born) stressed that it was every Finn’s moral obligation to ensure that itinerant Russians were “ostracized” through “the pressure of general patriotic opinion”: “No citizen can watch with indifference as natives of a foreign country rove in

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59 *Vårt Land* (March 14, 1899), 1; *Östra Nyland* (March 15, 1899), 2; *Hufvudstadsbladet* (March 28, 1899), 4; *Mikkelin Sanomat* (April 22, 1899), 1–2. Such misconceptions had already been corrected before 1899. See also Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 251–52.

60 Matti Klinge, *Studenter och idéer. Studentkåren vid Helsingfors universitet 1828–1960*. III: 1872–1917 (Helsingfors: Studentkåren vid Helsingfors universitet, 1978), 206–11; Immonen, “Kun Venäjän laki tulee,” 125–26.

61 *Björneborgs Tidning* (April 18, 1899), 2. See also Alanen, *Suomen maakaupan historia*, 457–58; Naakka-Korhonen, *Halpa hinta*, 47–48.

62 See, for example, *Wiipurin* (April 21, 1899), 2–3.

63 *Österbottningen* (March 11, 1904), 2; *Västra Finland* (March 12, 1904), 3.

gangs throughout the country, spreading worthless trinkets, devastating diseases and dangerous doctrines that lead to the disintegration of society.”<sup>64</sup>

The resistance writers made the battle against itinerant Russians’ hostile intentions a central element of constitutional passive resistance, a political strategy that, despite its name, was all but passive. Quite the contrary, the doctrine built on the realization that Finnish autonomy could not be defended merely by passively demonstrating against Russian encroachments on Finnish law.<sup>65</sup> The protagonists of passive resistance portrayed it as a method of weaponless warfare, a metaphor used, for example, in the pamphlet *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar* (Appeal to defend the fatherland), portrayed by Huxley as an exemplary work of propaganda and “passionate patriotic spirit with calculated strategic argumentation.”<sup>66</sup> In this ideological construct, Finland was at war with Russia, but it was a war without weapons; instead of using force, the sly enemy was “insidiously attempting to sneak in from the East.”<sup>67</sup> The Russians were waging war by inundating the Grand Duchy with treacherous agitators attempting to befriend “unsuspecting and credulous Finns.”<sup>68</sup>

By stressing that Finland was at war with Russia, the resistance writers turned itinerant Russians into full enemies. And—as in any war—the nation needed to defend itself. The constitutionalist ideologues thus utilized the enemy image they had created in a manner typical of political leaders to prepare the people for war.<sup>69</sup> As violent defense was not an option in this case, other methods had to be applied. The main defensive measure that the resistance writers propagated was that of a complete boycott of Russians and Russian commodities in Finland. Until a better defense plan was developed, a boycott was the most effective way to drive the enemy out, and, as a method that was collective by definition, it required the participation of every Finn to succeed.<sup>70</sup> Resistance writers also

64 Victor Magnus von Born, *Huomattavaa syntyperäisten venäläisten kaupan harjoittamisesta ja venäläisistä postimerkeistä* (Stockholm: Isaac Marcus’ Boktryckeri, 1900), 1–2. Translation after Huxley, *Constitutionalist Insurgency*, 170. This pamphlet was not widely distributed according to Arne Cederholm, *Kagalens uppkomst och andra episoder* (Helsingfors, 1920), 5.

65 See, for example, Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 10–12; *Fria Ord*, no. 1–2 (1900), 5–6.

66 Huxley, *Constitutionalist Insurgency*, 169–70; *Fria Ord*, no. 1–2 (1900), 3.

67 [Furuhjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar*, 2.

68 *Ibid.*, 2.

69 Eckhart, “Making and Breaking Enemy Images,” 11–12.

70 [Furuhjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar*, 6–7; *Fria Ord* no. 1–2 (1900): 5–6; Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 11–12. The text in *Fria Ord*, titled “Försvarsåtgärder” (“Defensive measures”) is identical to Furuhjelm’s pamphlet. It claims that practical measures could not be presented in the conventional press because of censorship. The section that deals with peddlers was also published in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* (August 18, 1900, 2).

presented economic incentives to enforce their argument. In his pamphlet on the core idea of passive resistance, Victor Th. Homén stated that support of domestic work and the consumption of domestic goods would strengthen the Grand Duchy’s financial independence, which in turn was a prerequisite for political sovereignty.<sup>71</sup>

The boycott idea had already been featured in the press in the spring of 1899, though not as explicitly as it was expressed in the resistance writings. Readers had been urged to refuse itinerant Russians shelter and food, without mercy or compassion.<sup>72</sup> Those who offered shelter to itinerant Russians were to be viewed as unpatriotic and ran the risk of being accused of supporting their “criminal activities.”<sup>73</sup> Such rhetoric follows a typical pattern in the construction of enemy images, namely, the injunction to deny empathy to the perceived enemy on the grounds that this might prove dangerous and self-destructive.<sup>74</sup>

The programmatic ideology of passive resistance broadened the enemy image; now, the Finns were not only discouraged from contact with itinerant Russians but from interacting with Russians in general, including those who permanently resided in Finland. Exceptions could only be made regarding Russian subjects who had proved to be “complete Finns and good patriots.”<sup>75</sup> The idea behind the boycott was that if it succeeded, hostile Russians would be both unwilling and unable to settle in the Grand Duchy. Homén states that while this might seem harsh, the Finns were not to blame for the precarious situation that the Russian policy toward Finland had placed them in.<sup>76</sup> In the ensuing years, campaigns against Russians residing in Finland, primarily petty traders and merchants, were initiated. For example, a “committee for opposing Russianism” (Venäläisyyden vastustamiskomitea) was founded in Tampere in 1901, with the explicit ambition to render impossible the businesses of Russian peddlers and merchants in Finland. The methods to achieve this goal were to limit the consumption of Russian goods, to distribute pamphlets that discouraged trade with Russians, to establish networks between Finnish peddlers to support

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71 Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 13.

72 *Västra Finland* (March 15, 1899), 1.

73 *Vestra Nyland* (April 14, 1899), 2; *Wasa-Posten* (January 23, 1900), 2.

74 Spillman and Spillman, “Some Sociobiological Aspects,” 51.

75 Homén, “Passiivinen vastarinta,” 12.

76 *Ibid.*, 11–12.



domestic trade, and to encourage Finns to take on professions commonly held by Russians.<sup>77</sup>

The press campaign as such reveals little about the actual consequences the enemy image had for Russians in the Grand Duchy. Previous research indicates that the propagated boycott caused some degree of damage, especially to Russian petty traders and merchants, at least in the short term. In the spring of 1899, many peddlers were evicted or voluntarily returned to their home regions in Russia, with only the most experienced daring to return in the next two years. There is also evidence to suggest that merchants with Russian names were openly mocked, and some Russian shopkeepers were forced to close their business. Aulis J. Alanen maintains that the mutual trust and support that the majority of Finnish people had previously shown to Russian peddlers were never fully restored. He also states that the popularity that the peddlers lost in conjunction with the conflict was the main cause for the diminishing number of Russian peddlers in Finland in the early twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Interviews with former Russian peddlers conducted by Maiju Keynäs in the 1940s and 1950s also support the assumption that the events made circumstances harsher for Russians.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, even the ideologues of passive resistance themselves recognized that turning the attitudes of the Finns against Russian peddlers was a challenge. In his brochure, Homén stated that if the boycott was to succeed, the people had to be convinced that the peddlers—who had traditionally appeared to them as “decent,” “good-natured,” and “playful,” and whom they had therefore often protected from the police—had betrayed the confidence shown in them by resorting to being the enemy’s henchmen.<sup>80</sup> An article titled “Slapp moral” (Loose morals), published in the main underground newspaper *Fria Ord* in October 1900, indicates that the proposed boycott had failed. Its anonymous author states it as a “sad fact”<sup>81</sup> that the strong anti-Russian sentiments that the Finns had expressed in the preceding year had already weakened. While many people spoke about the necessity of avoiding contact with “all things Russian,” most had continued to buy Russian goods from Russian peddlers and

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77 Gabriele Schrey-Vasara, “Venäläisyyden vastustamiskomitea,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 85, no. 1 (1987): 3; Sami Suodenjoki, “Kauppiasboikotista kansallisuusvihaan. Valtaväestön ja venäläisten suhteet Tampereella vuosina 1899–1981,” in *Tampere kieliyhteisönä*, ed. Harry Lönnroth (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2009), 153–55.

78 Alanen, *Suomen maakaupan historia*, 456, 459–60; Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 252.

79 Naakka-Korhonen, *Halpa hinta*, 47.

80 [Furuhjelm], *Upprop till fosterlandets försvar*, 2–3.

81 “Slapp moral,” *Fria Ord*, no. 13 (1900), 1.

merchants in market squares, market halls, and their own homes like nothing had happened.<sup>82</sup>

## The Enemy Image in Finnish Historiography

From 1901 on, more acute conflicts replaced those surrounding itinerant Russians; in particular, these included the tensions surrounding the implementation of a Russian conscript law in the Grand Duchy and the Finnish boycott of it.<sup>83</sup> However, as relations between the Grand Duchy and the imperial administration remained strained until Finland’s independence in 1917, the press occasionally reminded readers of the Russians’ “treacherous agitation” around the turn of the century.<sup>84</sup> The image was also actively reproduced in the decades following Finland’s declaration of independence in 1917. While the Finnish strategy toward russification had by no means been unanimous, the ideology of passive resistance became a central building block in the teleological historical account of Finland’s road to independence. The proponents of passive resistance had been relatively few in terms of absolute numbers, but in retrospect they were easy to portray as those Finns who had dared to defend the nation against the enemy’s encroachments, and those who had refused to compromise and therefore led Finland toward independence.<sup>85</sup>

In the some of the history writing of the 1920s and 1930s, it is stated as a given fact that nationalist circles in Russia had hired itinerant Russians to agitate and stir unrest in the Grand Duchy in conjunction with the issuing of the February Manifesto.<sup>86</sup> As late as 1957, in his book on rural shopkeepers, Alanen claims that the majority of itinerant Russians in Finland around the turn of the century had been “henchmen of the oppressive government.”<sup>87</sup> He maintains that the idea of using itinerant Russians as stooges was consciously included in Bobrikov’s original plan to subdue Finnish

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82 Ibid., 1.

83 Einar W. Juva, “Det olagliga värnpliksuppbudet, värnpliksstrejken och tjänstemännens avsked,” in *Finlands ofärdsår 1899–1917*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1963).

84 See, for example, *Turun Sanomat* (April 15, 1906), 2; *Hämeen Sanomat* (November 21, 1906), 1; *Lahti* (January 19, 1907), 1; *Suomalainen* (January 23, 1907), 4; *Uusi Aura* (March 9, 1907), 3; *Social-Demokraten* (July 24, 1908), 2; *Savon Sanomat* (July 27, 1910), 1.

85 Päiviö Tommila, *Suomen historiankirjoitus. Tutkimuksen historia* (Porvoo et al.: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1999), 194.

86 See, for example, Edv. Hjelt, *Itsenäinen Suomi. Unelmasta todellisuuteen* (Helsinki: Tietosanakirja, 1921), 66.

87 Alanen, *Suomen maakaupan historia*, 456.

autonomy. However, Alanen maintains that few of the agents were from White Sea Karelia, the home region of most Russian peddlers in Finland, and asserts that the majority of those who had been hired as spies and agitators originated from the Olonets Governorate.<sup>88</sup> This may have been an attempt by Alanen to disconnect White Sea Karelians, many of whom had successfully settled as shopkeepers in Finland both before and after 1917, from the enemy image.

An example of how Finnish history writing between the wars stressed national unity in the past is found in Eino Parmanen's book *Taistelujen kirja* (Book of battles), published in 1936. Although the Finns had been strongly divided socially, economically, and politically, Parmanen underlines that there had been unanimous participation in the struggle to evict all Russians from Finland in 1899 and 1900, forcing two thousand peddlers to flee. He recognizes that the evictions had been harsh and that they had caused suffering to some completely innocent Russian subjects, but stresses that it was something that the Finnish nation had been forced to do to defend itself.<sup>89</sup>

Some authors convey more nuanced interpretations of the events. In the first comprehensive historical overview of the Russian era, *Elva årtionden ur Finlands historia* III, published in 1923, Finnish historian Bernhard Estlander recognizes that while there was undoubtedly agitation in Finland in which Russians may have participated, it was not orchestrated from above.<sup>90</sup> Estlander's view is more or less consistent with modern research, which has found no evidence of organized agitation.<sup>91</sup> However, it is a fact that rumors were spread, addresses were collected, and agitation in favor of "Russian law," thought to improve the living standards of the poorest population, did occur in Finland.<sup>92</sup> While mobile Russians, especially peddlers, may have participated in the agitation, their motive was probably not political conviction. Rather, historians have emphasized the role of itinerant people as distributors of news and information in the era before modern communications.<sup>93</sup> Bringing intriguing news and rumors was one

88 Ibid., 456, 459.

89 Parmanen, *Taistelujen kirja*, 265.

90 B. Estlander, *Elva årtionden ur Finlands historia* III: 1898–1908 (Helsingfors: Söderström & Co Förlagsaktiebolag, 1923), 59–60. For a similar account, see J. N. Reuter, "Kagalen": ett bidrag till Finlands historia 1899–1905, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 199 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1928), 44–45. Reuter ascribes the phenomenon to a typical psychological reaction in a conflict situation.

91 Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland*, 170; Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 254–55.

92 Immonen, "Kun Venäjän laki tulee," 126.

93 Häkkinen, "Kiertäminen, kulkeminen," 250; Pia Karlsson, "En officer och gentleman? De ryska sågfilarna och spionanklagelserna," in *Bröd och salt. Svenska kulturkontakter med öst*, ed. Roger Gyllin et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1998), 149.

way to secure a warm welcome from the sedentary population in local society, including shelter and food, which itinerant people were completely dependent on. It therefore seems plausible that itinerant Russians may have spread the kind of rumors that they knew their customers, often belonging to the lower strata of society, wished to hear.<sup>94</sup>

In recent years, historians have shifted the focus from the alleged agitation of Russians to the political disunity within the Grand Duchy of Finland. Such interpretations stress that the Finnish conservative elite consciously created the enemy image out of fear of potentially subversive forces that could have been set in motion if the lower classes of society did prove to be susceptible to false rumors. To counter such a development, they decided to divert attention from the lines of internal division by creating the image of an external enemy that threatened the unity of the Finnish people. The political left, in turn, had an interest in upholding or even strengthening the lines of division, and therefore lacked a motive to deny the potentially subversive rumors.<sup>95</sup> The agendas of both political factions resonate with the core function of an enemy image, which, according to Fiebig-von Hase, is to serve specific ideological purposes rather than objective truth.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusion

The enemy image of mobile Russians that the Finnish press created in conjunction with the Russo-Finnish conflict around 1900 followed a typical pattern for how such images are created. As “agents and spies” supported by nationalist anti-Finnish forces in Russia, the enemy’s intention was claimed to be to divide the nation by spreading potentially subversive rumors, to agitate the lower classes of society against the higher classes, and to convey to Russian leaders a false impression of the political sentiments in Finland. Negatively charged metaphors, likening itinerant Russians to dirt, parasites, and harmful moles, were utilized to construct the image.

The function of the enemy image was to make the Finnish people act in a manner that would make itinerant Russians’ allegedly harmful mission impossible and discourage more Russians from settling in the Grand Duchy.

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94 Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys*, 143.

95 See, for example, Peltonen, *Talolliset ja torpparit*, 263; Tommila, *Suuri adressi*, 254–56; Suodenjoki, *Kuriton suutari*, 97; Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland*, 287–91.

96 Fiebig-von Hase, “Introduction,” 15.

The goal of the constitutional opposition was that measures toward this would be taken at every level of society. The police detained Russians for illegal trading or on suspicion of spreading rumors, the local authorities discouraged people from interacting with suspected agitators, and information campaigns were launched to correct the subversive ideas and misunderstandings that itinerant Russians allegedly spread.

In the Finnish underground press, publishing from the fall of 1900, the struggle against itinerant Russians became more explicitly ideological, and it was made part of the program of passive resistance. The constitutionalist interpretation was that Russia was waging a war without weapons against Finland, which required defensive measures to be taken. The most important of these was a complete boycott of “all things Russian,” seen as the moral duty of every patriotic Finn. The enemy image was now broadened to include Russians who resided in Finland permanently, as well as Russian consumer goods. While the boycott does not seem to have been the success the resistance writers had hoped for, there is evidence to suggest that the press campaign did to some extent negatively affect the existence of Russians, at least in the short term.

Although other more topical conflicts replaced the one surrounding mobile Russians by 1901, the enemy image created in the years 1899–1900 was reproduced in Finnish historiography. Especially in the early decades of independent Finland, official history writing was dominated by the constitutionalist interpretation of passive resistance as a successful strategy that had paved Finland’s road to independence, and many historical works presented it as a fact that itinerant Russians had indeed been involved in subversive political agitation between 1899 and 1901. Later history writing has nuanced this picture; while not denying that agitation did occur, modern research has found no evidence that it was orchestrated from above. Rather, it has been suggested that the enemy image was a product of internal political struggles; the constitutionalists had an interest in stressing the existence of an external enemy to downplay lines of internal division. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the creation of this enemy image followed a typical pattern. It depicted Russians as “strangers” with hostile intentions, who posed an external threat to the internal unity of the Finnish nation and served ideological aims rather than objective truth. It also demonstrates how itinerant groups can easily become targets of suspicion in times of conflict and that the campaign against itinerant Russians was more politically programmatic than previous research has suggested.

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