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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0b23348s>

### Journal

Journal of Baltic Studies, 20(2)

### ISSN

0162-9778

### Author

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### Publication Date

1989-06-01

### DOI

10.1080/01629778900000061

Peer reviewed

# ESTONIA IN SEPTEMBER 1988: STALINISTS, CENTRISTS AND RESTORATIONISTS

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The situation in Estonia is changing beyond recognition by the month. A paper I gave in late April on this topic needed serious updating for an encore in early June and needs a complete rewrite now, in early September 1988.<sup>1</sup> By the time it reaches the readers, the present article will be outdated, too. Either liberalization will have continued far beyond the present stage or a brutal backlash will have cut it short. Is the scholar reduced to merely chronicling events? Not quite. There are three basic political currents that took shape a year ago and are likely to continue throughout further liberalization and even a crackdown. This framework will help to add analytical perspective to the chronicling.

## *Political Forces in Soviet Estonia*

Broadly put, three political forces are vying for prominence in Estonia: Stalinists who want to keep the Soviet empire intact, perestroika-minded centrists whose goal is Estonia's sovereignty within a loose Soviet confederation, and restorationists who want to reestablish the pre-WWII Republic of Estonia. All three have appreciable support within the republic population. In many cases the same person is torn among all three: Emotionally he might yearn for the independence of the past, rationally he might hope only for a gradual formation of something new, and viscerally he might try to hang on to gains made under the old rules. (These gains include not only formal careers but much more; for instance, a skillful array of connections to obtain scarce consumer goods, lovingly built over a long time, would go to waste in an economy of plenty.)

1. *The Stalinists* lost control of the republic top leadership in June 1988 but are still entrenched in various bureaucracies. They are supported by the gut-level feelings of many of the Russian-speaking immigrants, who form one third of the population. Some Russian colonists are afraid of losing their privileged status, which they see as a right rather than a privilege. Many more feel that an

autonomous Estonia would no longer have a place for them. They want to return to the recent past, without asking whether this is feasible.

In August 1988, the Stalinists proclaimed an "International Front," in opposition to the Estonian-led "Popular Front for the Support of Perestroika" (to be discussed later). The Interfront at that time seemed to have a couple of thousand members.<sup>2</sup> The facade of the Interfront consists of unskilled workers concentrated in a few factories in Tallinn, but behind the scene they profit from the help of well-trained professional organizers. It is unclear to what extent they will have access to the official press or be able to publish their own writings in print.

2. *The restorationists* include a number of ex-prisoners and other people who dared to speak up under Brezhnev and had their careers broken. They are supported by the gut-level feelings of most Estonians. Older people remember the crushing of Estonia's independence in 1940 and the subsequent terror and mass deportations. People of any age have experienced treatment as second-rate citizens in their own country, such as losing a long-awaited apartment to Russian immigrants fresh off the train, or being cursed out at the post office for speaking Estonian. Even apart from nationality issues, Estonia's prewar independence looks like a golden age compared to almost anything the Soviet rule has brought. The restorationists want to bring this past back again, with fairly little indication of the means to be used.

As early as in August 1987, the restorationists proclaimed an organization, "Molotov-Ribbentropi pakti avalikustamise Eesti Grupp" (MRP-AEG)—the Estonian Group for Making Public the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In February 1988, this was complemented by a declared political party, Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatus Partei (ERSP)—the Estonian National Sovereignty Party. It should be noted that this name does not use the usual Estonian word for "independence" (*iseseisvus*) but a less provocative term (*sõltumatus*) which could be rendered as "sovereignty," something the union republics theoretically have, according to the Soviet constitution. The ERSP was given a formal foundation on 20 August 1988, with 102 charter members.<sup>3</sup> (If this looks low, remember that the Estonian Communist Party had 133 members at the time the Soviet army occupied Estonia.) The number of sympathizers is considerably larger. The restorationists have suffered from several of their activists being illegally expelled to Scandinavia by Soviet authorities.

Interviews with some leading restorationists such as Lagle Parek have been published in the official press, but in general it has been closed to them.<sup>4</sup> Thus they are reduced to samizdat publications which no longer carry stark penalties but suffer from a lack of technical means. They have some vocal support among the Estonian émigré organizations in Sweden and North America. Article 1 of the ERSP charter says: "The ERSP is a political union of individuals, and its goal is restoration of the independent democratic Estonian state on the basis of generally recognized principles of the international law." A "Political Declaration," also adopted on 20 August 1988, indicates that the ERSP intends to achieve this goal by peaceful means, mainly by persuading Moscow that Estonia's independence is in Russia's interest:

The demand for independence is not extremism; it is the most realistic, sober and illusion-free way to overcome our concerns and problems. The Stalinist policy of conquest has not been a blessing for Russia either; the age-old villages of central Russia are empty, fertile fields are fallow and grown over, and grain must be imported.... The Russian people feel even more insecure than we do, in face of prospects of new onslaughts of Stalinism. Their hope for a more normal future would receive a boost when another Stalinist crime is undone through restoration of our independence.<sup>5</sup>

This is in line with the views of some saner elements in the Soviet Russian Pamiat society.

3. *The perestroika-minded centrists* include most of the intellectuals and an uncertain fraction of technocrats and officials. From January to August 1988, they gradually increased their foothold in the republic top leadership. They are supported by those Estonians and local Russians who stop and think about feasibility. Any reformers in Estonia are autonomists almost by definition. The Soviet system is over-centralized, and no meaningful reform is possible without a switch from branch management to territorial management. In non-Russian republics, this involves not only economic autonomy but also cultural autonomy.

This is where the Russian reformers hesitate, asking whether territorial autonomy could not be a prelude for secession. The restorationists, on their part, feel that autonomy within the Soviet framework is a contradiction in terms and cannot possibly be implemented, unless it be watered down to little more than the right to use the Estonian national flag. Accused by Stalinists of being closet separatists and also accused by restorationists of being disguised Stalinists, the centrists have to be on guard in both directions. Compared to them, both the restorationists and the Stalinists live in a simpler world of "them" against "us" that is marred only by pervasive ingratitude and treason.

The major centrist organization is the Popular Front (Rahvarinne—RR) for the Support of Perestroika. It was first proposed publicly in a 13 April 1988 TV talk by Edgar Savisaar, a former middle-ranking official in the republic planning committee who, gradually frozen out of any duties, left. During the same night, an "initiative group" formed and worked out a declaration which was submitted to the ECP Central Committee and the ESSR Supreme Soviet Presidium. After a 29 April meeting at the ECP CC (with Stalinist First Secretary Karl Vaino absent), official approval was obtained.<sup>6</sup>

The Popular Front claimed 40,000 supporters in June and 60,000 in August, 1988, one-third of them CP members.<sup>7</sup> Formally, the republic-wide RR was founded at a conference on October 1-2, 1988, when representatives of local chapters met to elect the top leaders and adopt a general program. By this time the different RR support groups had a membership equal to that of the republic Communist Party (about 100,000)—a symbolism of some importance. The RR Initiative Center has been led by rank-and-file CP members. Besides Savisaar, the most visible leader is Marju Lauristin, head of the Department of Journalism at the Tartu State University, who is the daughter of the first prime minister of the republic after Stalin annexed Estonia. A leadership consisting of CP members offers some protection against Stalinist charges but leads to

restorationist charges that the RR is a creature of the Communist Party. However, the proposed RR rules allow no person to belong simultaneously to the CP or government leadership and that of the Popular Front. In August 1988, Savisaar was offered cabinet status as vice-chair of the new Committee on Industry, which would put him in charge of perestroika in Estonia; if he accepts, he presumably cannot continue in the formal RR leadership.

The RR rejects claims and charges that it is a separate party; nonetheless it declares its intention to nominate candidates in elections, if needed. It has extensive access to some parts of the Estonian-language press (especially the outspoken Tartu daily *Edasi*), but has difficulties with the Russian-language press. On its own, it managed to print in June and July 1988 the two first issues of a slim bulletin (*RR Teataja*), but no third issue came in August. On national sovereignty, the position of the RR Initiative Center was the following, according to a statement on 23 July 1988:

Every nation has an inalienable right... to be the master of its fate.... For the first time in Estonian history, these values—national sovereignty and statehood—were realized to an appreciable extent with the Republic of Estonia.... Stalinist large-nation policy liquidated Estonian sovereignty.... Estonians do not presently consider the Estonian SSR a sovereign state.... The Initiative Center does not approve of separatist attempts that do not take into account the very real international, economic, political and ethnic factors that affect Estonia's situation.... Estonia's political sovereignty can, under the present world conditions, come about only in the form of a socialist nation state based on the right of self-determination. The least painful path toward it is a transformation of the Soviet Union from a federal state into a confederation of states.... Also, a practically functioning political mechanism with juridical guarantees must be developed that would ensure the reality of national self-determination up to leaving the union.... The Popular Front can assume responsibility for implementing these perspectives only if radical perestroika continues. A victory of the opponents of perestroika would force us to seek other ways to defend the Estonian country and people.<sup>8</sup>

From the Stalinist viewpoint, such goals may be construed as indistinguishable from separatism, while from the restorationist viewpoint, they lack the sacred words "independence" and "restoration." Stalinists and restorationists both have a clear view of what they want, because it already has existed, while the RR declaration is groping for something new and hence diffuse. This is the difference between being oriented toward the past or the future.

Another centrist organization is Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts (EMS)—Estonian Heritage Society—that claimed 6,000 members in August 1988. (A more literal translation of its name is Estonian Society for Protection of Antiquities.) The first republic-wide meeting of local heritage societies took place already in October 1986, but the nationwide organization was formally created on 12 December 1987. A number of well-known writers gave talks at this meeting, but they have not participated visibly since then. The EMS is headed by Trivimi Velliste, a journalist, and Mart Laar, a historian, and includes Russian, Jewish, and Armenian branches. While determined to restore the national past (including the national flag and a monument to prewar President Päts of

independent Estonia, whom Stalin deported), the EMS has taken no stand regarding the future.<sup>9</sup> It voiced support for the RR early on, but also has cooperated with the MRP-AEG in restoring monuments to the Estonian War of Independence (largely fought against Trotsky's Red Army).<sup>10</sup>

The EMS is unique among the Estonian organizations in legally receiving supplies from a parallel organization abroad, Väliseesti Muinsuskaitse Selts (VMS)—the Heritage Society of Estonians Abroad. It was created on 22 May 1988 and is headed by the orchestra conductor Neeme Järvi.<sup>11</sup>

The Green Movement also is centrist, and its leadership partly overlaps with that of the RR. The Green Movement of Estonia was formally created, on the basis of existing groups, on 23 May 1988. Its charter voices local and worldwide ecological concerns, demands phasing out of nuclear energy, supports the formation of a Nordic Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone to include Estonia, and opposes excessive immigration and "colonialist economic activities" of the central Moscow ministries. A major spokesman of the Green movement is journalist Juhan Aare, who was picked as a member of the Estonian delegation to the June 1988 Moscow party conference (from which RR leaders Savisaar and Lauristin were excluded). While the Green movement wants to prevent the destruction of the Estonian ecology by ill-considered projects proposed by the central Moscow ministries, it has advanced no explicitly political proposals, but intends to field ecologically-minded candidates in elections, if other groupings should fail to do so.<sup>12</sup>

Without doubt, the picture outlined here oversimplifies a complex and fluid situation, but one must start somewhere. The early version of this three-component classification brought some criticism from both the restorationists and moderates in Estonia, both contending that there were really only two forces. However, the restorationists obtained this result by lumping the RR with the Stalinists, while the moderates saw the RR and the restorationists as separate expressions of the same anti-Stalinist effort (and this seems also to be the view of Stalinists). These contradictory perceptions of a dichotomy visibly confirm the existence of a third, intermediate current. It should also be noted that the centrists have an inclusive attitude ("Who is not against us is with us") while Stalinists and restorationists share an exclusionist attitude ("Who is not with us is against us.")

### *Chronology of Events*

In the beginning of 1987, Estonia trailed Moscow in political activity. The mobilizing event was opposition to phosphate mining in Spring 1987.<sup>13</sup> Born out of despair about literally losing the land underneath their feet to catastrophic pollution, the phosphate protest movement probably was meant by many protesters as a hopeless last-ditch stand, but it succeeded: The mining plans were stopped, at least for a few years. This success engendered confidence. The credit for the next step goes to the restorationists, who organized an unprecedentedly large demonstration on 23 August 1987, the anniversary of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, at Hirvepark in Tallinn. The authorities grudgingly gave permission for it, and this was unprecedented, too. Several thousand people attended—more than anyone had anticipated.

At this point the future centrists, who were cautiously and slowly organizing, realized that they were losing initiative to forces that could provoke the very Stalinist backlash the centrists wanted to avoid by going slowly. The Hirvepark demonstration may have speeded up the publication of a proposal for Estonia's economic autonomy by Edgar Savisaar and others (the so-called "Four-Man Proposal," September 1987).<sup>14</sup>

Fall 1987 also brought open discussion of Stalin's crimes after the occupation of Estonia.<sup>15</sup> In December 1987, Christmas was rehabilitated, with articles pointing out its ties to pre-Christian Yuletide.<sup>16</sup>

A threatening secret meeting with an emissary from Moscow on 22 December 1987 failed to deter Estonian newspaper editors, but indicated that the republic top authorities were feeding Moscow misleading information that painted any reformist activities as separatist. The outcome was demotion of Stalinist ECP Secretary Rein Ristlaan in January 1988 for "failing to control nationalism." He was replaced by Indrek Toome, a former vice-premier, who established a dialogue with the autonomists.<sup>17</sup>

Estonia's Independence Day (24 February) brought the first sharp disagreement on tactics between restorationists, who planned another round of mass demonstrations, and autonomists, who thought new demonstrations much too dangerous. These worries were enhanced by demonstrations in Tartu on 2 February 1988, the anniversary of the Estonian-Soviet peace treaty of 1920. Police forces had acted brutally and seemed to ache for further confrontation. The result was a letter by forty-eight well-known cultural figures, most of them with good non-Stalinist credentials, to avoid both demonstrations and repression of them on the 24th. With some difficulty, the letter was published in newspapers.<sup>18</sup> As a further means to defuse the issue, the authorities acceded to demands to publish positive reviews of the events leading to Estonian independence in 1917-1920, in complete reversal of the Stalinist lies that had prevailed up to then.<sup>19</sup> From then on, praising of the pre-Soviet period of independence became open. The demonstrations on 24 February 1988 took place anyway (with about 10,000 attending in Tallinn), but they remained peaceful both on the part of participants and the police forces.

All non-Stalinists agreed on the need to commemorate March 23, the anniversary of the deportations of 1949. This time, the bombshell came from the Stalinists, in the form of an anonymous article fully maintaining that all deportees had deserved their lot.<sup>20</sup> In face of the resulting commotion in the press, the demonstration itself took a back seat. But this provocation may have accelerated further developments. April 1988 was a month of highlight upon highlight.

April 1-2 saw a meeting of the leaders of the creative unions (writers, artists, journalists, etc.) where criticism barely stopped short of discussing secession. Among the republic CP and government officials, only Toome bothered coming to the meeting (and giving a noncommittal talk). The press and TV coverage was extensive. One could argue that this was the birth of a centrist force clearly distinct from the restorationists, while forcefully opposing the Stalinists. The meeting passed resolutions voicing distrust in the republic leadership, and these were published.<sup>21</sup>

The Heritage Society brought out the long-forbidden national colors during a festivity in Tartu (14-17 April 1988), arguing that these colors predated their use as state flag during independence.<sup>22</sup> It was a psychological move with a tremendous impact. Less flashy, but equally momentous in its consequences, was the initiation of the Popular Front in late April.

The First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, Karl Vaino, was a Siberian-born party hack appointed by Brezhnev, possibly because he stood out by his lack of knowledge of his ancestral Estonian language. The course of events had him completely baffled. He understood neither the language nor the motivations of the people over whom he bossed. Gradually, he became almost invisible in public life, leaving confrontations to his underlings (mainly Ristlaan and Prime Minister Bruno Saul) but inciting writings against economic autonomy and sending secret complaints to Moscow.

The last straw was the appointment, on 31 May 1988, of the Estonian delegation to the upcoming CP conference in Moscow without any elections among the many candidates nominated.<sup>23</sup> An attempt to remove Vaino failed, but the mood became extremely tense. At the same time, a long-scheduled festival, the Old City Days (11-14 June 1988), marked the breakthrough for the blue-black-white national flag in Tallinn. An estimated 60,000 people participated in what came to be known as the Night Song Festival (10 and 11 June), where masses of young people waved flags to the tune of rock music up to dawn but maintained remarkable discipline. However, the potential for action was evident. On 14 June the deportations of 1941 were commemorated. When the Popular Front called for a mass meeting on 17 June, to meet the Estonian delegates to the Moscow conference, Vaino told the Kremlin that the situation was out of hand and asked for military intervention. Indrek Toome managed to convey a more realistic picture and prevented rash action.<sup>24</sup> Vaino's alarmist attitudes were becoming extremely dangerous, and the Kremlin agreed to have him dismissed on 16 June 1988.

The next day 150,000 people gathered to the largest mass meeting ever in Estonia (except for the Song Festivals, with up to 250,000 attending). Out of Estonia's 32 delegates to the Moscow CP conference, only 5 dared to attend (including Toome).<sup>25</sup> The restorationists had previously taunted the reformists as a bunch of isolated intellectuals, while the restorationists could get thousands of people out to demonstrate. Now the Popular Front had bested them at their own game.

The new First Party Secretary was Vaino Väljas, former Soviet Ambassador to Venezuela and then Nicaragua. A homegrown Estonian who had attended Tartu University and later became one of the ECP secretaries, he was widely expected to become ECP First Secretary already in the mid-1970s but lost out to Karl Vaino. Väljas now was Moscow's candidate for the job, and Toome, who was also nominated, declined. Up to September 1988 Väljas kept a low profile, studying the situation. But he apparently shifted the ECP bureau meetings immediately from Russian to Estonian, telling its local Russian members that he, too, had had to master Spanish very quickly when sent to Latin America: Simultaneous translation headphones were supplied only to Second Secretary Alioshin, since he acts as Moscow's emissary.<sup>26</sup>



During the month of June 1988, the Heritage Society (at times in cooperation with MRP-AEG) rededicated to the War of Independence five monuments which had been hidden and saved when the Soviet regime had all such monuments destroyed. Clergymen and church choirs participated. In Võru a newly formed boy scout troop was in evidence, the first since the Soviets disbanded boy scouts in 1940. The rhetoric at times became very explicit. The national flag flew unimpeded. On 23 June 1988, the Presidium of the ESSR Supreme Soviet legitimized the "national colors" while maintaining the existing Soviet Estonian flag as a "state flag;" it also gave the town of Kuressaare its age-old name back, replacing "Kingissepa," based on the name of a revolutionary. However, an attempt to turn the clock back by one hour, to fit Estonia's time zone rather than Moscow's, was blocked by Moscow. On 9 September 1988, the ECP CC gave its backing to the long-standing demand that Estonian become the official language in Estonia.<sup>27</sup>

The Moscow CPSU conference (28 June-1 July 1988) offered a welcome opportunity to clarify the Estonian position. Apart from replacing Vaino with Väljas, the Estonian delegation remained as appointed under Vaino. But the former yes-men of Stalinists, true to form, now acted as yes-men to Väljas, who unambiguously supported meaningful economic autonomy for the republic. It was soon reported that the Baltic republics, the Tatar ASSR and the city of Moscow would switch to economic self-management on 1 January 1989. However, central ministries and the Estonians were miles apart on what it meant, and the republic Prime Minister Bruno Saul gave lip service to Estonian interests, while covertly playing along with his fellow Brezhnevites in Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

In Summer 1988, the last taboos regarding blank spots in history crumbled. Already by February 1988, Estonians had become free to praise almost anything in their pre-Soviet history and to condemn almost anything during the Soviet period, but with one marked exception: The period in 1939-40 which saw Soviet annexation of Estonia. Soviet legitimacy hinged on this period, and as late as early June 1988, I ventured the opinion that this taboo would continue for a long time to come. I could not have been more wrong. The May 1988 issue of the literary monthly *Looming* had a slate of articles glowing with praise for the achievements of the independent Republic of Estonia.<sup>29</sup> The June issue included a scathing description of the Soviet occupation of Estonia:

What happened was a peaceful but very resolute military entrance to the saturation point. A few days later, a little staging of a revolution was superimposed—a pretty clumsy and unconvincing one, although attended to by such a famous stage director of the Stalinist school as Andrei Zhdanov in person. But didn't the Estonian people thereafter elect a new parliament, consisting of those who decided to liquidate Estonian sovereignty? Sure, given that at the so-called free elections of July 1940, the candidates opposing those of the Working Peoples' League were simply refused registration—and this was the entire election there was. Given that, what was the point of posting Red Army politruks, *nagaan* pistols at the hip, at even the most remote voting places—they who were as yet, for heaven's sake, as yet aliens?

But enough about this nice and bloodless revolution (we got blood and all that aplenty later on) and about this long-stale fairy tale of nations located in the midst of 20th-century Europe—a hopping three of

them at once!—who enthusiastically voted themselves free of the burden of sovereign statehood.<sup>30</sup>

The memoirs of the single non-Zhdanovian candidate allowed to remain on the lists complement the description of the electoral farce. Jüri-Rajur Liivak won in all precincts, but was declared the loser district-wide. Later, by the war's end, he was among the five survivors out of six hundred Estonians in a labor camp and was released in 1955 with a short apology for the "mistake."<sup>31</sup> The rest of the press joined the condemnation of the Soviet occupation—the legal press!<sup>32</sup>

On 11 and 12 August, the republic main daily *Rahva Hääl*, up to June 1988 a last bastion of Stalinism, published the text of the secret addendum of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, by which Hitler assigned Estonia (among others) to the Soviet sphere of influence. The Estonian Group for the Publication of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP-AEG) had reached its explicit goal. The commemoration of the pact, on 23 August 1988, started with a demonstration involving MRP-AEG and ended with a mass discussion organized by the Popular Front.

What about the legitimacy of the Soviet rule in Estonia, after these revelations of awkward truth about occupation and annexation? Marju Lauristin bluntly declared as a fact that "Estonia was illegally joined to the USSR"—just as the German conquest of Estonia in the 1200s was illegal. If restoration of independence, then which one was it to be: that of the 1930s or that of the 1200s?<sup>33</sup>

### *Restoration of Past Independence or Advance Toward New Independence?*

At one end of the range of future possibilities for Estonia is the Stalinist powerless republic (or even abolition of republics within the USSR). In the middle is a meaningful autonomy. At the other end is independence. The following does not deal with feasibility or desirability but addresses an important nuance that is often missed.

Independence can come about in two very different ways: restoration of the old or evolution of something new, something as different from the independence of the 1930s as the latter was from the independence of 1200 A.D. While it could be reasonably argued that Estonia's history took a decisive wrong turn with the German conquest in the 1220s, a return to the pre-Christian past was out of the question when Estonians could again decide their own fate. Too much time had gone by. In fact, the Estonian awakening in the 1800s would have been fatally weakened, if it had aimed at restoration of paganism. The contrary was the case, of course: Minor clergy of the German-imposed Christian religion supplied much of the national leadership. Now the minor clergy of the Russian-imposed Leninist religion is leading the Popular Front.

The analogy is imperfect, if not for other reasons then simply because of disparate time intervals. From 1230 to 1850, over 600 years had gone by.

From 1940 to 1988, less than fifty years have gone by, and restoration is still a plausible option. After ten years of foreign occupation, restoration would be the dominant option. After two hundred years, it would be no longer an option: A new independence would require a completely new framework. The

difficulty for Estonia right now is that the Stalinist occupation has lasted neither ten nor two hundred years but fifty years. The issue is not just the difference between pragmatic autonomy and proud independence—after all, autonomy is not a bad starting base for a quest for independence. The issue is also the difference between "restoration" of independence and "advance" toward independence.

The connection between the terms "independence" and "restoration" is not automatic. In principle, there can be independence without restoration. And this may be at the heart of the tension between the restorationists and the centrists.

The present Soviet rule in Estonia violates the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 between Estonia and Lenin's Russia, for it was established by brute force in the wake of a Stalin-Hitler agreement. The blatant illegitimacy of its beginnings has not been assuaged by the least shred of new legitimacy based on meaningful elections. Under these conditions, the only legitimacy rests with the prewar Republic of Estonia. Autonomy now may be a stepping stone toward a new form of independence, although such a course is by no means inevitable. However, autonomy would be another step away from restoration of the past independence, because autonomy would supply a new source of legitimacy, if based on reasonably free elections. Hence autonomy would impede restoration.

The result is that besides the tension between Moscow-oriented Stalinists and those who want the Estonian nation to survive, there is also an inherent tension between the forward-looking and the backward-looking independence advocates. The former welcome autonomy (although all who welcome autonomy may not yearn for independence). The latter distrust autonomy. And both have some reasonable arguments.

After fifty years of occupation, the restoration path to independence is reasonable, because people are still alive who remember the past independence and can serve as a bridge. The continuing legal recognition of the prewar Republic of Estonia by many countries is not an asset to be thrown away lightly. Undoing an obvious injustice offers moral satisfaction. The complementary disadvantage is that this course offers also most dissatisfaction to the imperialist currents in Moscow, by explicitly asking them to undo and repent their earlier act. This makes the restoration, as a path to independence, the path of maximum resistance.

Advancement toward independence is also a reasonable path, after fifty years of occupation. Apart from a few legations and consulates abroad, the political and administrative structure of 1920-1940 has been completely destroyed. Moreover, even the underlying social structure has been severely damaged. Under these conditions, restoration becomes a meaningless word. Either one takes restoration literally and reestablishes a structure that fits 1940 but is anachronistic in 1990, or else one adjusts to the world of 1990, and then there is no restoration. Advance toward new independence, in contrast, works pragmatically in the context of 1990. It moves stepwise, wherever concessions can be worked out with Moscow. Those skeptical of such dependence on Moscow's good will must remember that the ERSP "Political Declaration" also considers persuading Moscow as a prerequisite for independence. If so, then advance toward autonomy is, as a path to independence, the path of least resistance. Popular Front leader Marju Lauristin clearly preferred swimming with the flow,

if possible, but also showed some appreciation for the need of a radical alternative:

It is not surprising at all (in fact, it is quite natural) when schoolboys of 14 to 17 discuss whether it would not be better to exit from the Union.... It is essential that there is a practical alternative in the form of the present trends in the Union.... Therefore, maybe there is no reason to risk and jump off from a train moving at full speed in a direction favorable to us. One can surely note that the destination is very far away, but it would get no closer at all, if we meanwhile jump off the train.

....

One must clearly specify the political realities and one's own options. I think it is very reasonable that a radical and a less radical version be worked out. The radical variant is like a sail that pulls ahead. But at the same time, the entire democratic movement also needs an "engine."<sup>34</sup>

### *Conclusions*

As of September 1988, the Estonians have achieved gains in symbolism and self-expression that would have sounded like a fairy tale one year ago—and may sound like a dream one year from now in September 1989, if things go wrong. Regarding meaningful autonomy, the progress has been almost nil, and a tough road lies ahead. The food situation has worsened, and this may increase popular impatience. The abundance of glasnost and scarcity of perestroika are symbolised in a recent issue (28 July 1988) of *Saarte Hääli*, the newspaper of the island of Saaremaa. On the second page, the Saaremaa Rahvarinne announces a meeting to commemorate the dedication, sixty years ago, of a now-destroyed monument to the War of Independence. But the front page announces distribution of rationing cards for sugar, coffee, and alcohol—a sad record for any government in times of peace.

The Estonian population is remarkably united in their opposition to Stalinism and russification. The Stalinists find mass support only among some sections of Russian migrants. But the Estonians have varied opinions regarding the goals to be pursued in the immediate future. The autonomist and restorationist strategies can complement each other, as long as a mutual attitude of tolerance is maintained.

### *Postscript, July 1989*

The flow of events since September 1988 has been massive, but I see little need to reinterpret the events described here. The analysis in terms of three broad categories is still useful, although the number of political groupings has meanwhile increased and there has been a general shift of the center towards what used to be considered radical one year earlier. By now the Heritage Society has openly declared full independence its long-range goal, and it cooperates with the ERSP (and the more recent Christian Union). However, the Heritage Society considers a Hungary-like transitory stage tactically advisable, and some ERSP leaders have come to accept such a course. This represents a de-radicalizing shift for the ERSP. The Popular Front is oscillating between earlier demands for confederation and new demands that sound like full independence. The ECP

leadership has espoused the stand held by the Popular Front in early summer 1988 (a genuine federation). The Intermovement alone continues to argue for a centralized empire.

"Center" is a relative term. In the purely Estonian context the Popular Front continues to be the center insofar as it enjoys the support of the majority (50% of the ethnically Estonian population, according to an April 1989 survey) and the rest is fairly evenly divided among more radical forces (almost purely Estonian) and more reactionary forces (largely Russian immigrants). However, in the context of the Soviet Union, where Gorbachev is widely seen as leading the centrist forces, even the ECP leadership is more radical than Gorbachev. The Intermovement is aligned with the Ligachev conservatives in the Kremlin, and the Popular Front of Estonia looks very radical when viewed from Moscow. Moscow still has monopoly of military power, but the crumbling of the Stalinist claims about history has left the restorationists with a monopoly of historical truth in the eyes of most Estonians. Might versus right is a mix fraught with danger.

## NOTES

- 1 Rein Taagepera, "Estonia Under Gorbachev: Stalinists, Autonomists, and Nationalists," Conference on Soviet Cultural Politics: Gorbachev and the Non-Russian Nationalities, USIA Office of Research and IREX, Washington, DC, 29 April 1988, with a shortened version in *BATUN Occasional Papers* No. 2. 1988; Rein Taagepera, "Presidential Address, June 10, 1988: Resurgence of Baltic Centrism," *AABS Newsletter*, XII: 3 (August 1988), 6-10.
- 2 Joel Aav, "Internationalist Front: Aiming at National Divide?" *Homeland*, 27 July 1988. *Homeland* is the English-language supplement to the Soviet Estonian weekly *Kodumaa*, which is specifically aimed at Estonians abroad. It used to be the worst propaganda rag in a field with considerable competition for this title. However, it has evolved during the last year and is now one of the most outspoken newspapers in Estonia. Moreover, the English supplement is an invaluable source of rapid information for Western scholars who cannot read Estonian. Apart from the *Moscow News*, *Homeland* seems unique in the Soviet Union. When possible, this article will refer to *Homeland* rather than an equally valid Estonian-language periodical.
- 3 "ERSP juhatuseteade" [Announcement by the ERSP leadership], 21 August 1988.
- 4 "2. veebruar 1988 Vanemuise 46 ringauditooriumis" [The 2 February 1988 in the circular auditorium at 46 Vanemuine Street], *Edasi*, 5 February 1988, includes a photo of Lagle Parek and about one hundred lines of her statements and responses to questions at a public meeting. *Edasi* is the daily of the university city Tartu. Hans Luik, "Eve Pärnaste: 'Me pole kunagi kavaldanud'" [We have never dissimulated], *Kultuur ja Elu*, July 1988, 30-36, condenses a panel discussion of the editors with six MRP-AEG members, including Eve Pärnaste and Lagle Parek, plus excerpts of the proposal to form the ERSP, as originally "printed in the MRP-AEG Info Bulletin, February 1988." "Picketing for Human Rights," *Homeland*, 13 July 1988, describes the MRP-AEG and ERSP protest for release of political prisoners.
- 5 "ERSP asutava koosoleku poliitiline deklaratsioon" [Political declaration of the charter meeting of the ERSP], adopted on 20 August 1988.
- 6 Lembit Koik, "Tormiline aprill" [The stormy April]. *Rahvarinde Teataja* [The RR Herald] No.1, 16 June 1988; "Popular Front: Gaining Strength," *Homeland*, 25 May 1988, includes a full translation of the principles of the RR, as first published in *Edasi*, 30 April 1988.
- 7 The RR had 13,000 members in late May ("In Brief." *Homeland*, 1 June 1988), more than 40,000 on 9 June ("Popular Front in Action." *Homeland*, 15 June 1988), and nearly 60,000 in late July, according to Leonid Miloslavsky and Nina Belyayeva, "The Popular Front: Lessons from Estonia's Experience in Pro-perestroika Civic Initiative," *Moscow News*, 7-14 August 1988, 16.
- 8 "Rahvarinde Algatuskeskuse seisukoht enesemääramise kohta" [The position of the RR Initiative Center on self-determination], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 5 August 1988, 3.
- 9 Trivimi Velliste, "Four Months of Heritage Society," *Homeland*, 20 April 1988; Mart Laar, "A Fruit of Combined Effort," *Homeland*, 15 June 1988, documents the first opening of a monument by the Heritage Society, that of clergyman Villem Reiman (1861-1917), in the presence of ten clergymen, as shown on a photo taken by Tunne Kelam, now a member of the ERSP

- Council; Evgenia Gurin-Loov, "Society of Jewish Culture," *Homeland*, 6 July 1988, is by the chairperson of this Society, a branch of the Estonian Heritage Society.
- 10 The re-dedication of monuments to the War of Independence as well as various events ranging from the dedication of the Reiman monument (see Note 9) on May 29 and the Old City Days of 11-14 June (see next section) to the 14 June commemoration of deportations and a forceful speech by Velliste on 2 July can be seen on a series of videotapes available through the Heritage Society of Estonians Abroad.
  - 11 The first brief mention of VMS in Estonia was by Trivimi Velliste, "Päikese-paisteline revolutsioon" [A revolution with sunshine], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 10 June 1988, 3; T. Velliste, "Väliseesti Muinsuskaitse Selts" [Heritage Society of Estonians Abroad], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 1 July 1988, gave a longer description along with a contact address, that of VMS secretary Rein Taagepera, and was followed by articles in other newspapers. See also "To Remain an Estonian," *Homeland*, 20 July 1988.
  - 12 Hilda Kaljula, "The Greens Are Coming," *Homeland*, 25 May 1988; Tiit Made, "Green for Survival," *Homeland*, 22 June 1988; Juhan Aare, "Estonia is Ill, Says the No. 1 Green Journalist," *Homeland*, 3 August 1988.
  - 13 For details, see Mare Taagepera, "Ecological and Political Implications of Phosphate Mining in Estonia," *JBS*, 20 (1989), 165-74.
  - 14 For details, see Toivo Miljan, "The Proposal to establish Economic Autonomy in Estonia," *JBS*, 20 (1989) 149-64.
  - 15 Evald Laasi, "Mõnede lünkade täiteks" [To fill some gaps], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 17 November 1987, can be considered the pivotal article regarding deportations. Excerpts are translated in Taagepera, "Estonia Under Gorbachev..." conference version (see Note 1).
  - 16 *Looming* No. 12, 1987, has a series of articles on the subject: Jaan Kaplinski, "Kui ring saab täis" [Completing the circle], 1668-1670, ending with the statement "I believe in Christmas;" Mart Mäger, "Inimeste jõulud" [Peoples' Christmas], 1671-1675; Mall Hiimäe, "Rahvakalendri talvepühad" [Winter holidays in the folk calendar], 1676-1681.
  - 17 For a biography of Toome, see *Homeland*, 20 January 1988.
  - 18 "Eestimaa elanikele!" [To the inhabitants of Estonia], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 19 February 1988, 5. An English translation is given in Taagepera, "Estonia Under Gorbachev..." (see Note 1), along with a characterization of various signers.
  - 19 Külle Arjakas, "Ühe riigi sünnist" [On the birth of a state], *Vikerkaar* No. 2, 1988, 61-68, was probably the most explicit, followed by Toomas Karjahärm, "Iseseisvumise taustast" [On the background of achievement of independence], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 19 February 1988, 2-3. Hannes Valter, "At the Outset of Estonian Statehood," *Homeland*, 24 February 1988, and a panel discussion, "Coming to Grips with Blank Spots in Estonian History," *Homeland*, 2 March 1988, also represent marked deviations from the previous Soviet claims.
  - 20 "Klassivõitlus Eestis 1940-1950-ndail aastail" [Class struggle in Estonia in the 1940s and 1950s], *Rahva Häääl*, 10 March 1988, 3-4. The anonymous article was presented as an ETA (Estonian News Agency) news release.
  - 21 The 7, 15, 22 and 29 April 1988 issues of *Sirp ja Vasar* are full of conference resolutions and speeches, and a videotape of sequences shown in the Soviet Estonian TV is available from the Heritage Society of Estonians Abroad. "Imperative: Radical Changes," *Homeland*, 20 April 1988, gives full translation of proposals sent to the forthcoming 19th all-Union Party Con-

- ference. A critical letter sent to the Estonian republic authorities is translated in *Taagepera*, "Estonia Under Gorbachev..." (see Note 1).
- 22 The breakthrough article that distinguished between "national flag" and "republic flag" was by Toomas Haug, "Ühest kultuurloo tabust" [On a taboo in cultural history], *Looming* No. 3, 1988, 406-408. A very cautious report on the Tartu Heritage Days (14-17 April) appeared in *Sirp ja Vasar*, 22 April 1988, p.7, omitting any mention of national colors but already showing the photo of a slogan "Yes to the Estonian Popular Front." *Homeland* completely overlooked the Tartu Heritage Days. By 20 May 1988, the blue-black-white flags were in evidence on the front page of *Sirp ja Vasar*, in a photo of the Tenth Rock Music Days in Tartu. The first photo of the flag in *Homeland* was on 15 June 1988, in a report on the Reiman monument (see Note 9).
  - 23 The previously cautious *Homeland* wrote on 8 June 1988: "A list of candidates to be voted on was hurriedly drawn up amid great controversy, since it excluded the most outspoken candidates. Though formally there were no irregularities in the voting procedure at the [ECP CC] plenum, there were no democratic elections either: The initial list of 77 was reduced to just 32, the exact number of delegates Estonia can send to Moscow. All 32 then received the required number of votes." Criticism of Vaino and Prime Minister Bruno Saul is mentioned, as well as calls by some local Party organizations for elections of a new ECP Central Committee.
  - 24 Personal communication.
  - 25 "Tens of Thousands Meet Delegates to the Watershed Conference," *Homeland*, 22 June 1988. *Homeland* erroneously gave the date of the mass meeting as MAY 17 and corrected it on 29 June 1988. Heinz Valk, "A Singing Revolution," *Homeland*, 29 June 1988, reviews the moods at the 17 June demonstration and the previous ones. For the 14 June commemoration of deportations, see Joel Aav, "Under the National Tricolor," *Homeland*, 6 July 1988.
  - 26 Personal communication. For an official biography of Väljas, see "New CP Leader in Estonia," *Homeland*, 22 June 1988. The American press in Summer 1988 widely misspelled the name of Väljas.
  - 27 See Note 10 about videotapes of monument dedications. For legalization of colors, see Joel Aav, "Under the National Tricolor," *Homeland*, 6 July 1988; Kuressaare: "Former Name Restored," *Homeland*, 6 July 1988; time change: "Back to Local Time," *Homeland*, 20 July 1988, and "Good and Bad News from Moscow," *Homeland*, 24 August 1988. Estonian as official language: *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 1988, 2.
  - 28 Interview with Rein Otsason, "Teel vabariigi isemajandamisele" [Toward republic self management]. *Noorte Hää*, 24 July 1988, 1-3. Heinrich Ausmees, "Kuidas peaminister piirab immigratsiooni" [How the Prime Minister limits immigration], *Edasi*, 26 August 1988, makes public a hitherto secret ESSR government decree of 18 July 1988 (Decree No. 344, section 3), which requires preferred treatment in cooperative housing for newcomers who have worked ten years in the Soviet Far North or similar regions. While the initiative came from Moscow (CPSU CC and USSR Council of Ministers, Decree No. 406, 31 March 1988), Saul played along with his bosses, without mobilizing or even forming the public opinion in Estonia. At the same time, Saul, who in Vaino's time opposed republic self-management, gave it lip service: "The republic sovereignty cannot be envisaged separately from the notion of self-management" (in *Rahva Hää*, 29 July 1988).
  - 29 *Looming* No. 5, 1988: Rein Ruutsoo, "Kuidas mäletada ühte ajastut?" [How to remember an era?], 674-676; Mart Laar, "Mõtteid Eesti vabariigist" [Some thoughts about the Republic of Estonia], 677-678; Mati Hint, "Eesti Vabariik



- ja eesti keel" [The Republic of Estonia and the Estonian language], 679-682; Endel Nirk, "Kirjandus omariikluse perioodil" [Literature during the period of statehood], 683-684; Ants Viires, "Eesti Rahva Muuseum. Rahva-ja muinasteadus" [The Museum of the Estonian People: ethnography and study of prehistory], 685-687; Uno Liivaku, "Eestikeelne ajakirjandus 1918-1940" [Estonian-language press, 1918-1940], 688-690; Mart Kalm, "Eesti Vabariigi kogemustest ehituskunstis" [The experiences of the Republic of Estonia in architecture], 690-693.
- 30 Endel Nirk, "Juhuslikud eksitused?" [Accidental errors?], *Looming* No. 6, 1988, 830-832.
- 31 Jüri-Rajur Liivak, "Mälestusi käidud eluteest" [Reminiscences from the path life took], *Looming* No. 6, 1988, 813-25.
- 32 One of the bluntest descriptions of Summer 1940 was given in a panel discussion of ten historians organized by the editors of *Edasi* and published as "1940. ?" *Edasi*, 26 July 1988. A dozen exile works are listed, ranging from memoirs to Toivo Raun's *Estonia and the Estonians* (1987), and the panel's conclusions broadly agree with the exile account. Aigar Vahemetsa, "Tõekuulutamise eskalatsioon!..." [Escalation of announcing truth], *Sirp ja Vasar*, 19 August 1988, 12, asks a series of questions that punch hole after hole into the Stalinist version of 1939-40.
- 33 Extensive quote of Marju Lauristin in Leonid Miloslavsky and Nina Belyayeva, "The Popular Front: Lessons from Estonia's experience in pro-perestroika civic initiative," *Moscow News*, 7-14 August 1988, 16.
- 34 "1988. aasta kuum suvi" [The hot summer of 1988], interview with Marju Lauristin, *Noorte Hääl*, 7 August 1988, 2.