

# **ESTONIAN HISTORY**

By Joe Enge

## **Ancient to 17th Century**

Located to the west of Russia, south of Finland, and east of Sweden; Estonia has long been at the crossroads of culture, trade, ideas, and all too often war. The ancient Greeks and Romans knew of Estonia as the source of the highly profitable amber trade. In 320 B.C. Pytheas of Marseilles traveled to the exotic Baltic region and made mention of the Estonian island of Saaremaa, calling it Baltia. The current president of Estonia Lennart Meri wrote a book, controversial since many historians question some of his premises, about Pytheas's journey to Estonia called "Silver White". In 97 A.D. Tacitus wrote in his Germania that amber can be found washing ashore the territories of the Aestii.

Long before the arrival of the Germanic or Slavic tribes, the Estonians migrated from the Ural Mountain region to present day Estonia some 5,000 years ago. These ancient tribes also settled in Hungary and Finland. The languages of Estonia, Finland, and Hungary are Finno-Ugric and are distinctly unrelated to the Indo-European later arrivals. Do to the geographical and historical ties between Estonia and Finland, their languages are the most similar of the three. The close relationship between Estonia and Finland has been reestablished after five decades of forced Soviet isolation. Today Finland is Estonia's number one trading partner.

During the Viking period the Estonians were involved in a war of raids and counter raids with Sweden and Denmark. The Estonians have long had a reputation as excellent sailors, in particular the people on the island of Saaremaa. Using the island as a base from which to raid neighboring coasts, they twice burned the ancient Swedish capital of Sigtuna in 1181 and 1188. As one of the last holdouts against Christianity, the Estonians soon found themselves being targeted by crusaders.

The first attempt to Christianize them was in 997 when King Boleslaw of Poland sent Adelbert, the Bishop of Prague. It is rumored that one of the Estonian leaders, Sikko, had Adelbert killed in revenge for the death of his brother at the hands of the Poles. Adelbert's death infuriated King Boleslaw who would later try to invade Estonia from 1013 to 1015. King Boleslaw failed and was repulsed.

The next attempt to convert the Estonians came from their former allies to the east, the Rus (Varangians). The Rus accepted Christianity from Byzantium in 988 and this strained their alliance with the Estonians, which lasted from 860 to 1030. In 1030 the Rus invaded and captured the city of Tartu. Around 1059 or 1061 they were driven out of Estonia, ending the second attempt to convert them.

The third attempt to Christianize the pagan Estonians was prompted in 1193 when the Pope called for a crusade against all non-believers in Northern Europe. Some 100,000 or so Estonians soon found themselves facing the more advanced and better organized German, Danish, and Swedish knights. From Riga the Germans advanced from the south. Later the Danes landed in the north, founding the eventual capital of Tallinn. The Swedes landed between the two groups, but were lulled into a false sense of security and were all slain.

The Estonians were a loosely organized tribal society that had a yearly assembly of elected elders. Calling upon the help of Taara (Thor) they went into battle only to be defeated tribe by tribe. The last holdouts were on the island of Saaremaa. Taking advantage of the particularly cold winter, which froze the Baltic Sea between the island and the mainland, the knights were able to

cross and storm the last of the Estonian strongholds in 1227. Until 1918 the Estonians would remain under foreign domination.

The Danes in the north fortified their stronghold in Tallinn (Reval) while the Livonian Order of Knights and the Bishop of Tartu consolidated their positions in central and southern Estonia. In 1248 Tallinn joined the Hanseatic League and Tartu joined sometime in the 1280's. The Estonians became serfs in a feudal system where they would be unable to own land until the mid-19th century. They revolted a number of times, the most important being the St. George's Night Rebellion from 1343 to 1345. Disturbed at the prospect of the Danes selling their holdings to the more repressive German Order, the Estonians in the north rose up only to be harshly put down. In 1346 the Danes sold their interests for 400 to 500 kgs. of silver to the Germans.

The strategic importance of Tallinn is reflected by the impressive and numerous towers and fortifications built over the centuries to protect the city, most of which still exist. The Old Town (Vana Linn) retains the medieval atmosphere with narrow cobblestone streets and architecture of the period. The tallest tower (Tall Hermann) rises proudly next to the Estonian Parliament Building.

The Reformation came to Estonia in 1523 and the first known publication in the Estonian language was published in 1525. The Lutheran religion has been the dominant religion since then and brought with it a strong emphasis on education, which has become an important part of the Estonian character. By the end of the 19th century Estonia had a 78% literacy rate. Many a young man was motivated to learn the rudiments of reading and writing in the 1800's in order to marry his sweetheart as required by many local pastors.

In 1558 Ivan the Terrible invaded Estonia starting the Livonian War in an attempt to gain access to the Baltic Sea. The ensuing war pitted Sweden, Poland, and Denmark against Russia and lasted until the final Russian troops were driven out in 1583. The war devastated Estonia with their population dropping from 250,000 down to 100,000. The city of Tallinn swore allegiance to the Sweden in order to protect themselves from the Russia and by 1629 the entire Estonian mainland belonged to the Swedes.

The Swedes are looked upon as having been benevolent rulers. The German landowners remained, but some of their powers were regulated to the benefit of the Estonian serfs. In 1632 King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden founded Tartu University which has remained one of the leading universities in the region. The Estonian population recovered and grew to 350,000 to 400,000.

## The Russians Are Coming

Peace would not last, for once again an ambitious Czar set his eyes on Estonia. In 1708 Czar Peter the Great captured and leveled Tartu. He decreed that henceforth only wooden buildings would be allowed because he had a hard time capturing the city. This decree would later be rescinded after three fires in 1755, 1763, and 1775 destroyed Tartu so that the less combustible stone buildings could be built. By 1710 Peter the Great had captured Tallinn and conquered all of Estonia. The city of Tallinn was forced to surrender due to the Black Death breaking out within the city walls. The Baltic German landowners were able to protect and even expand their privileged positions by having surrendered. The Russian Empire, which has never been known for being progressive, gave the Germans a free hand unlike the Swedes. The war and its effects left an Estonian population of only 140,000. In 1721 Tartu's population had dropped down to 21.

The lot of the Estonians slowly improved in the 19th century. The population recovered, and in 1819 abolished serfdom. Legal changes in 1849 and 1856 allowed the peasants to buy land and to pay their rents with money instead of labor. The period from the 1860's to 1885 was one of a great national awakening. As more Estonians were able to attend the German dominated Tartu University, an intelligentsia developed which started research into the Estonian language, history, and culture. The first Estonian song festival was held in Tartu in 1869. The tradition of expressing their strong patriotic feelings in song is central to understanding Estonian culture, and why their break from Moscow from 1988 to 1991 was called the "Singing Revolution". In 1862 the Estonian national epic "Kalevipoeg" by Friedrich Kreutzwald was published. "Kalevipoeg" (Kalev's son) is a very strong, if not always smart, hero similar in many ways to our own Paul Bunyan. Kalevipoeg had a giant of a horse rather than a blue ox. In 1884 a student fraternity at Tartu University consecrated a blue, black, and white flag which would later become the Estonian national flag. During this period great strides were made in which the Estonians defined themselves as a distinct nationality and culture.

A change of policies from the Czar's court in St. Petersburg reflected a rising sense of Russian nationalism from 1885. Schools and local governments had to increasingly use the Russian language and people were encouraged to convert from the Lutheran religion to that of the Russian Orthodox Church. In spite of being in the Russian Empire, few Russians lived in Estonia at the time. In 1901 from funds collected throughout the Russian Empire, the Alexander Nevsky Church was built to dominate the Tallinn skyline while less than 10% of the populace followed its Russian Orthodox beliefs. National movement organizations were also shut down as a part of the Czar's efforts at Russification. The Estonians rose up in the 1905 Revolution, but were brutally repressed with some 300 people executed.

## Independence

The advent of World War I made for the Estonians their first opportunity for independence. As the war dragged on and political instability increased, demands for autonomy appeared. The fall of Czar Nicholas II and eventual replacement by Lenin started a power struggle in Estonia between nationalists and Bolsheviks. The complete deterioration of the Russian front brought in the German Imperial Army. Estonian independence was declared February 24, 1918, but was not recognized by the Germans. The German occupation was short-lived because Germany collapsed in November of 1918.

The Estonian War of Independence lasted from 1918 to 1920 when the Soviets quickly invaded in the wake of Germany's collapse. By the beginning of 1919 the majority of Estonia had fallen to them. In January the Estonian army swiftly counter-attacked under the leadership of General Johan Laidoner. Within a few weeks the Soviets were completely driven from Estonia. Another Estonian hero from this war was Julius Kuperjanov who raised a partisan regiment in the Tartu area and was mortally wounded in battle. By April 1919 Estonia had a force of 86,000 and had been assisted by the British fleet and some 4,000 volunteers from Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. The Estonians could still not breathe easy for a new force threatened them from Germany. A Landswehr group composed of Baltic Germans and mercenaries threatened to establish their dominance in Estonia. They were defeated in two battles in northern Latvia in May of 1919. The Soviets then resumed their offensive against Estonia to put pressure on them during the armistice negotiations. The Tartu Peace Treaty of February 2, 1920 officially ended the war, and the Soviets "voluntarily and forever" renounced all future claims in Estonia. With great effort and sacrifice Estonian independence had been achieved. On December 1, 1921 Soviet organized bands attacked the Estonian government. They failed to overthrow it, but many lives were lost. The time for Estonia for Estonians had arrived.

It is easier to win independence than to organize a stable government in the ensuing peace, as we experienced in American history in the 1780's. This was true for Estonia during their period of independence. Lacking a political tradition of their own, the Estonians developed three constitutions; one in 1920, 1933, and 1937. The first constitution proved to be unstable with a large number of political parties and some 20 different governments between 1920 and 1933. The second constitution went to the other extreme giving the president dictatorial legal powers and was a reaction to both fractious politics and the world-wide depression. The two leading political figures of this period were Konstantin Päts and Jaan Tõnisson. On March 12, 1934 Päts with the help of the armed forces chief General Laidoner seized power in a bloodless coup. During this "period of silence" political parties were disbanded and Päts ruled as a benevolent dictator. Tõnisson objected to these moves, but was powerless to stop him. Though Tõnisson advocated a more democratic system, he tolerated no dissension within his party ranks. Päts on the other hand tolerated open discussion and dissensions within his own ranks, while at the same time censoring public materials. Neither of them comes across as pure figures embodying the democratic ideals as we can find in Washington, Adams, or Jefferson.

The third constitution of 1937 was put together in a more stable political and economic situation with a two chamber parliament and was a balance between the extremes of the 1920 and 1933 constitutions. In April of 1938 Konstantin Päts was elected president in the last free national elections to be held until September of 1992. Treachery and war were on the horizon.

## Conquest and Occupation

One cannot imagine having any worse neighbors than Hitler to the west and Stalin to the east. On August 23, 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact giving Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, parts of Poland, and parts of Romania to the Soviets in return for letting Hitler invade Poland and unleashing World War II. In September while the world's attention was on the German Wehrmacht in Poland, Stalin set up military bases in the Baltic States and occupied his portion of Poland. Stalin had successfully played Hitler off against Britain and France, while gaining territory in the bargain. To the surprise of Stalin, and the world, France fell quickly. Millions of Europeans would pay dearly for Stalin's deal.

The Soviet Union massed troops on Estonia's borders, sent warships into their waters, and flew warplanes over Tallinn to intimidate them into allowing Soviet bases in their country. A "Mutual Assistance Pact" was signed on September 28, 1939 between Estonia and the Soviet Union in which 25,000 Soviet soldiers would be stationed on various bases within their country in return for a guarantee that there were to be no interference in Estonia's economic or political system. The same Soviet demands were made to Latvia and Lithuania and were complied with.

The question and controversy surrounding Konstantin Päts is why did he give in to these demands without greater political and military resistance. With only 15,000 troops at his disposal and no outside help available, he felt it would have been futile to fight. He believed that by compromising with the Soviets, he could save lives while guaranteeing Estonian sovereignty. Naively, President Päts believed in Stalin's sovereignty guarantees. He prevented even a symbolic show of resistance, as called for by Jaan Tõnisson and the officer corps of the Estonian army, so as not to offend the Soviet "goodwill". Many Estonians strongly disagreed with President Päts' decision and felt sold out, yet the decision had already been made and General Laidoner was backing it. The Estonian foreign minister Karl Selter foresaw the dangers ahead and left the country with his family. The rest of Estonia could only hope that President Päts was right and that Stalin would live up to the agreement.

While Soviet troops moved into Estonia, the Deputy Commissar of the NKVD (later the KGB) General Serov drew up plans for the eventual arrest of all anti-Soviet elements in Estonia. Hitler's speedy and successful campaign in France in June of 1940 gave Stalin an opportunity to complete his occupation of the Baltic States without drawing too much attention. On June 16, 1940 Stalin demanded the formation of a pro-Soviet government and the stationing of additional troops in Estonia. He gave the Estonian government eight hours to reply, otherwise the Soviet armed forces would be unleashed on them. President Konstantin Päts accepted and retired the government on June 17, 1940. He had gambled that a compromise with Stalin could save Estonian independence and had lost.

The Soviet army quickly occupied all of Estonia and set up a puppet government under Johannes Vares, an Estonian quisling who was a devoted communist, doctor, and poet. He wrote under the pen name of "Barbarus" and was one of the few native Estonians in the puppet government. The Estonian Communist Party had only 133 members in June of 1940. The majority of officials in the new government were ethnic Estonians, but had been raised in the Soviet Union. They were referred to as "Russian Estonians" and usually spoke poor Estonian, but were loyal to Moscow. On July 14 & 15, 1940 a staged election was held to give at least the appearance of legitimacy for the new government. On July 21 & 22, 1940 the new government declared itself the "Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic" and requested entry into the Soviet Union while nationalizing all industries and land. On August 6, 1940 Moscow formally accepted them into the Soviet Union. In less than a year Stalin had destroyed the Estonian government and its independence without a shot being fired. Now he could turn on the Estonian people.

The German Gestapo and the Soviet NKVD (KGB) used similar tactics to terrorize people. They had learned that people offer the least resistance in the late evening and early morning hours, and that this maximized the terror effect on both those taken and the population left behind. On the evening of June 13th and the morning of June 14th, 1941 the NKVD herded up whole families across the country, over 10,000 Estonians, and shipped them in cattle cars to the remote regions of

Siberia and northern Russia. 70% of those taken were women, children, and the elderly. Most perished in the inhuman conditions forced upon them, never to see their homeland again. An additional 9,000 people were arrested at the same time, and later 1,741 bodies would be found in a mass grave. A total of some 60,000 Estonians were deported, arrested, or murdered in the first Soviet occupation, or 6% of the population. Päts, Laidoner, and Tõnisson were all to die in Soviet prisons. The Soviet installed quisling Vares (Barbarus) is rumored to have killed himself out of guilt for the part he played in destroying his own people in 1946.

On June 22, 1941 Adolf Hitler turned on his ally and invaded the Soviet Union. The German troops entered Tartu in late July and took Tallinn in late August. The Germans soon made it clear that they had no intention of restoring Estonian independence. Estonia became German Ostland and Hitler made long-term plans for its eventual colonization. Because the Estonians are a non-Slavic, nordic people with cultural ties to Germany, the German occupation was less harsh than the Soviet occupation. The urge for revenge against the Soviets for the crimes they had committed motivated many Estonian young men to join the German "East Battalion". Several thousand Estonian men joined the Finnish army in their struggle against the Soviets and became known as "The Finnish Boys". The Estonian government in exile advised young men to join the Finnish or German forces in order to learn the military skills necessary for a future struggle for Estonian independence. At this same time the Soviets formed the "Estonian Rifle Corps" from the conscripts they seized before retreating out of Estonia.

The reversal of fortunes in the Eastern Front brought the Soviet army back in Estonia's direction in February 1944. In the previous month a Soviet offensive designed to drive the Germans from the suburbs of Leningrad and to destroy the bulk of the German Eighteenth Army forced German General Walter Model to retreat to the previously prepared "Panther Position" running along the Estonian-Russian border. 40,000 Estonians joined the German army and helped stop the Soviets at the Narva River. The front held in that relatively narrow and defensible sector, but the entire Eastern Front was falling apart. By the end of July 1944 the Soviets were poised on the outskirts of Warsaw, were in a position to take Riga, and had isolated German Army Group North in Estonia. By August the Soviets had retaken Estonia with approximately 70,000 to 80,000 Estonians fleeing before their onslaught. The brutality of the first Soviet occupation was still fresh in their minds. Eventually the Estonian expatriate population spread as far as the United States, Canada, and Australia. Many didn't make it when rough seas, Soviet submarines, or warplanes sank their boats.

The Soviet army returned with a vengeance. In the process of retaking Estonia, they heavily bombed Tallinn and Tartu even after the Germans had withdrawn. Nearly half the houses in Tallinn were destroyed. Fortunately the medieval old town (Vana Linn) remained relatively unscathed, though one can still see a small section of rubble left over from the air raids. The Soviets would later teach in Estonian schools and write in all their publications that the retreating Germans caused the damage.

The city of Narva lay in complete ruins. The Germans had forcibly evacuated the Estonians out of Narva when it became a front. When the Soviets reconquered, they did not allow the Estonians to return to their homes. Because of this Narva is today 97% Russian. By 1945 the Estonian population had dropped down to 854,000 from a prewar figure of 1,136,000. Conquest and reconquest have taken their toll on the Estonian population over the centuries. In 1550 there were about the same number of Finns as Estonians, yet today the Finnish population is five times larger than the Estonian.

Thousands of men went to the forests to escape Soviet reprisals and to carry on the struggle for an independent Estonia. They became known as the "Forest Brothers". They had first taken to the woods in the summer of 1940 and had to do so again in the fall of 1944. Without any outside assistance to speak of, they remained active into the 1950's. Most were eventually hunted down or were able to obtain amnesty after Stalin's death. They were strongest in the more forested southern part of Estonia, particularly around Võru.

Labeled as "bandits" by the Soviet NKVD (KGB), they were able to ambush Soviet patrols in the woods and killed some high level NKVD officers. The most effective Soviet blow against the Forest Brothers was the introduction of widespread collectivization in 1949. The forced

collectivization made it harder for the Forest Brothers to obtain the food they needed from sympathetic farmers and families. The men would often sneak back home at night for quick visits and to obtain supplies. Some even provided the badly needed help with the crops by working the fields during the day dressed as women. The Soviets unleashed in March 1949 a massive deportation involving thousands of Estonians being sent to Siberia. These "Enemies of the People" were 92% composed of women, children, and the elderly. The Forest Brothers were able to free a few people where they could or extract revenge, for often it was their own families who were deported. Many families, or surviving members, fled together to the forest to escape the Soviet authorities. Their unnoticed struggle, few outside Estonia were aware of it, was doomed to failure because the expected outside help would not be forthcoming. Time and resources were on the Soviet side.

The nature of partisan warfare is often personal. One such example occurred when a rather unattractive Estonian woman, who worked for the Soviet authorities, had amorous feelings for a young man who was a Forest Brother. When he refused her advances, she had his girlfriend deported to Siberia. Infuriated by her actions he killed her. The Soviet authorities later put up a memorial for their dead "Hero of the People", but the locals knew the real story.

The last of the Forest Brothers was killed in 1978. August Sabe had become legendary in eluding the Soviets for decades. He once stated that his success was due to avoiding the most common mistakes made by his compatriots who fell one by one. They had invariably left the protection of the forest in search of booze or women, if not both, and got captured. August Sabe was finally cornered while fishing along a stream. Two Estonian KGB men dressed like two regular guys out fishing joined him in fishing the stream. When they felt his guard was down, they jumped him. Sabe struggled free, but drowned in the stream trying to escape.

Many young people of Estonia did what they could to resist the Soviet invaders. One organization of young high school and university students out of Tartu called the Blue, Black, and White, after the Estonian flag, printed and distributed leaflets as well as vandalized and blew up Soviet monuments. What they lacked in experience, they made up for in idealism and bravery. The NKVD took their activities very seriously as can be seen in two "Top Secret" reports written in November 1950 and February 1951. They give detailed insights into the struggle of the period in Estonia.

### *Top Secret*

*Addressed to Comrade Kosov, V.V., the Secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia.*

*A special report on the exposure and partial liquidation of the bourgeois\_national underground organization Blue\_Black\_White.*

*A monument to commemorate the soldiers who perished in the Soviet Army was blown up in Tartu by unknown people on the night of November 6, 1949. At the same time anti\_Soviet leaflets were being distributed in Tartu. The leaflets contained angry slander on Soviet reality and a caricature of a government and party leader. The leaflets had been made with a cliché specially prepared for this purpose.*

*Anti\_Soviet leaflets were distributed in Tartu on April 30, 1950 and in Viljandi on May 1, 1950. The leaflets had been made simultaneously with those delivered in November 1949. According to the investigation of the matter there is every reason to assume that the above mentioned activities had been pushed and fostered by the students of Tartu University and the senior students of Tartu high schools.*

*With a view to ascertain the participating personalities who had blown up the monument and delivered the leaflets and of those who had been suspected of accomplishing the anti\_Soviet acts, the NKVD of Tartu has taken measures and strengthened its activities at Tartu University and high schools.*

*Here are the list of personalities suspected of anti\_Soviet slander:*

*Peetso, Ülo Aleksander b. 1933; a student of Secondary Sch. No. 1*

*Pügi, Rein\_Artur Aleksander b. 1933; the son of the arrested member of the organization "RVL".*

*Viira, Heldur Rudolf b. 1932, with no permanent residence nor job; the inhabitant of Tallinn. His father was the Germans' understrapper during the occupation.*

*Viro, Ants Aksel b. 1929; neither a residence nor a job; the inhabitant of Tartu. Formerly convicted for keeping arms illegally. It has been certified during the campaign that the above mentioned persons deep contacts with Lehtjärv, Harald Jaan b. 1932, who has escaped imprisonment and declared being sought by the Tartu Militia Department for suspicion of the murder of the ..... family.*

*Campaigns and actions by both the Vigilance and the Militia Departments of Tartu have gathered proof and data to confirm relations between the above mentioned group and the students' and the senior pupils' underground organization. The action has helped to certify their ownership of firearms and their anti\_Soviet activity.*

*To guarantee security of the 33rd anniversary celebrations of the Great October Socialist Revolution and to prevent any anti\_Soviet activity, the Tartu Vigilance Department has secretly detained the following people:*

*Lehtjärv, Harald Jaan b. 1932*

*Viro, Ants Aksel b. 1929*

*Viira, Heldur Rudolf b. 1932*

*From the people detained in person and from special hiding places several weapons have been confiscated like a machine gun "RDL", 5 rifles, a pistol "Parabellum", a charge with a toluol shuttle, and 130 cartridges.*

*The investigation of the case and the activity of Lehtjärv, Viira, and Viro has confirmed their anti\_Soviet convictions. With the intention to establish an underground organization aiming to rise against the Soviet power in Estonia in case the war broke out between the U.S.S.R. and the American\_English imperialistic bloc, the former personalities had close associations. It seems fairly normal at this point that anti-Soviet meetings were assembled for that reason. Later, contacts through were created with the underground organization with its headquarters in Secondary School No. 1. Negotiations were settled to join the anti-Soviet group in this organization. A second aspect at these gatherings of this underground organization was to extend the range of anti-Soviet ideas in a larger scale. Since the three ringleaders have been arrested, they failed in their purpose.*

*It was thus in a sense inevitable that 35 more offenders (the students as freedom fighters) were detained between November 1 and November 16, 1950. The sole aim of the arrest was considered to achieve more facts and details from Viro, Viira, and Lehtjärv. As for the consequences of all this, those to be among the detained were the following staff members:*

*1 Piir, Karl b. 1930; a resident of Tartu, a 10 year education, from a working class family. Worked as a painter for "Areng".*

*2 Raidma, Ülo Harald b. 1930; a resident of Tallinn, incomplete university education, from a civil servant family. A student at Tartu University until his arrest.*

*3 Vaibla, Heiki Aleksander b. 1930; a former member of the Y.C.L. (Young Communist League), incomplete secondary education, from a working class family. A student of Tartu Secondary School No. 6 until his arrest.*

*4 Liiv, Mauno Aleksander b. 1931; a resident of Põltsamaa, from a civil servant family, and 11th grade student of Tartu Secondary School No. ...*

*5 Jõgiaas, Tõnis Endel Taavet b. 1931; a resident of Tartu from a working class family; a student of Secondary School No. 6. The secretary of the Young Communist League of that same school until his arrest.*

*6 Zovo, Ants August b. 1931; a resident of Tartu; from a working class family, no definite job.*

*In addition have been confiscated the organization members' statutes(4 copies); an entry oath (7 copies); a copy of Order of Merit of the organization; and guns. The confiscation procedure was performed during the detention. During the interrogation the detained certified that the anti\_Soviet underground organization Blue\_Black\_White was founded in Tartu at the end of 1947 on the initiative of Illiste Vello (died in 1949). After his death Piir, Karl (arrested) took over the leadership. The declared aim of the organization was to establish its branches all over Estonia (in urban areas; towns), to enlist new members, to launch a total attack against Soviet power in*

*Estonia, to attack and destroy the smaller military units located in Estonia, to blow up military objects, to undermine the economic power of the state implementing destructive blows and armed seizures on state enterprises. In their programs they demanded the restoration of bourgeois Estonia and the distribution of anti Soviet propaganda among the population. What was essential about the movement in this phase was to establish close contacts with other groups, organizations and terrorist gangs. One of the goals of the movement was to link itself with the Estonian government in exile. According to the confiscated documents one could predict no doubt on their intention to set up three more troops in the coming future.*

*a) reconnaissance patrol and shock troops\_ to destroy the forces, equipment and military objects of consequence in case of war by imperialist countries.*

*b) propaganda troops\_ definite political aims; propagate anti Soviet ideas in Soviet Estonia.*

*c) munitions troops\_ provide the organization with necessary equipment.*

*Each member of the organization was to fill in the form of application\_oath. A monument to commemorate the soldiers who perished in the Soviet Army was blown up in Tartu by the members of the organization "Blue Black White" on November 6, 1949.*

*Anti Soviet leaflets were distributed in Tartu and Viljandi on November 6, 1949 and on May 1, 1950. The arrested Viira, Viro and Lehtjärv attempted to assassinate a flight lieutenant comrade Nikandrov on June 16, 1950. Nikandrov was pursued in the Tartu district in the territory of Raadi parish. The information concerning the rest of the organization members, their identification and liquidation will be announced.*

*Security Minister of the E.S.S.R.*

*Colonel Moskalenko*

*Tallinn, November.... 1950*

#### *Follow Up Report*

*Addressed to comrade Käbin, I.G., the Secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia*

*An informational survey No. 3 of the Vigilance Committee of the E.S.S.R. from January 21 to 31, 1951*

*In the struggle against the bourgeois underground organization and its armed gangs members of the Vigilance Committee of the E.S.S.R. have assassinated 4 gang members.*

*Arrested:*

*a) 9 members of the nationalist organizations*

*b) 1 ringleader (chieftan)*

*c) 4 participants of the gang and single bandits*

*d) 31 (disciples) tools*

*e) 12 former active members of "Omakaitse" Self\_Defense*

*The total number of the arrested and assassinated: 61 people*

*The arms and ammunition that have been confiscated from the bandits:*

*1 automatic gun, 7 rifles, 9 pistols, 65 cartridges and 2 edged tools (sharp instruments)*

*Most characteristic of the operations are as follows:*

*The list of those arrested by the Vigilance Committee of Estonia the Tartu department:*

*1 Ojamäe, Virve Alfred b. 1930 from Vastseliina district; lived in Tartu, worked in commerce service*

*2 Hirv, Valve Gustav b. 1930 from Vastseliina district, lived in Tartu. A student at Tartu University*

3 Teska, Aime Kristjan b. 1930; a resident of Tartu, from a family of civil servants. A student of Teachers' Training College of Tartu

4 Talving, Imbi Juhan b. 1931 from Mustvee district from a middle peasant family; incomplete university education. Lived in Kallaste district, the village of Naelavere, the parish of Lahepera

The above mentioned people were members of the anti Soviet underground youth organization "Blue Black White". They assembled at illegal meetings and participated in distributing anti\_Soviet leaflets on May 1, 1950. Investigation to be continued.

The same department has arrested some members of the bourgeois national underground "New Estonia".

1 Kaldre, Juhan Karl b. 1928; came from Tartu district, lived in Tartu. A student of Tartu University until his arrest. A former Young Communist League member, an organization leader.

2 Kivisalu, Rein Eduard b. 1927; from Paide district from a middle peasant family. A 5th year student at Tartu University until his arrest. A former Young Communist League member.

3 Tõnisson, Evald Juhan b. 1928; from Paide district from a middle peasant family. A 5th year student at Tartu University until arrested. A former member of the Young Communist League.

4 Soots, Margus Eduard b. 1928; from Abja district from a family of civil servants. Lived in Tartu. A 5th year student at Tartu University until arrested.

5 Peets, Gustav Johannes b. 1928; from Paide, a family of civil servants. Lived in Tartu, a student at Tartu University until arrested.

In the spring of 1945 a national underground organization "New Estonia" "Uus Eesti" was set up by Kaldre in Paide Secondary School. Kivisalu, Tõnisson, Loots and Peets were involved in the organization activity. The aim of the organization was to restore the bourgeois Estonia. The above mentioned personalities participated in illegal assemblies of the organization. Debates and discussions at the meetings focused around the struggle against Soviet power. They published script paper with sharp criticism and political orientation against Soviet power. Liquidation of New Estonia is continuing.

The same department has arrested some more people in addition to the previous ones.

Kolter, Karl b. 1915; from Tartu district, a middle peasant family. During the occupation served in Self\_Defense. In 1944 avoided mobilization to the Soviet Army and concealed himself until 1946. He legalized later. In the search of his house in 1949 ammunition and arms were confiscated. The anxiety of being arrested for keeping arms illegally induced him to conceal himself underground until detention. At his arrest a pistol and 6 cartridges were confiscated. Investigation is continuing.

Between January 25\_26 this year an armed gang was liquidated by task force 2\_N MGB in Loksa district E.S.S.R.. A number of people were arrested.

Normet, Endel Jaan b 1922; from Tallinn; the agent of German intelligence service. Enlisted in the German Army in 1941. In service of the SS army corps. In the regiment of police he participated in the action against the Soviet troops. In 1943 he was sent to Germany to.....where he graduated from the cadets' school with a rank of noncommissioned officer. In October 1944 completed the courses for German intelligence service at Toila. He was sent to the Soviet rear with a group of saboteurs and spies on the night of September 22, 1944. The group, supervised by Veide, E (arrested) crossed Lake Võrtsjärv in boats. Being afraid of responsibilities for committed crimes, Normet concealed himself on several farms in former Järva county between 1944\_1947. In the autumn of 1947 Lumiste joined Ojalo, Eduard (arrested) the other member of the gang. He lived with the bandits Pekman, Viktor and Pegerman, Lembit etc. and was a leader of the bandits' unit. Living underground but being assisted by other bandits Lumiste launched several attacks (10) and robberies in shops and in private property in Võru district. On April 26, 1950 Isajev, Erich, a shop assistant in Rakvere district was murdered by Normet's instructions. Isajev was suspected of the extradition of the gang leader Lumiste to the Vigilance department.

Taltsepp, Erich August b. 1923 from Viru district. Lived in Loksa district in the village of Sagadi. He left for Finland in 1943 where he enlisted as a volunteer for the German Finnish Army in the SS corps. Participated in anti\_Soviet action. Since the autumn of 1944 he hid himself

*in Lumiste's gang underground. Legalized in 1946, handed his rifle, arms over to a bandit Kuuskla (assassinated). Living legally Taltsepp was in touch with Pekman, Ojala, Prass, and the other members of the bandit group. He gave them material aid. In May 1948 he was involved in the robbery of a shop in a village of Võhma in Viru district and in several other armed attacks. Pekman and Pegerman were assassinated in Taltsepp's house on January 25 the same year. Assassinated:*

*1 Pekman, Viktor 18, came from Karelian\_Finland arrived in Estonia. Concealed himself within the gang. In 1950 participated in armed robberies.*

*2 Pegermann\_Annus, Lembit 17, from Tartu. Concealed himself with his father within the gang (assassinated in 1949). Participated in armed robbery. Rifles, 3 pistols and about 200 cartridges have been confiscated.*

*Investigation is continuing.*

The campaign against the Estonians who refused to submit to the Soviets was brutal. Those arrested for handing out anti\_Soviet leaflets could easily get from 10 to 20 years in a gulag. The more dangerous types were simply assassinated without even a show trial. The references to the SS background of some refer to the Waffen SS, which drew its personnel mostly from the German occupied countries. Non-German citizens could not join the standard Wehrmacht, and were instead enlisted in the Waffen SS, which should not be confused with the branch of the SS, that oversaw the concentration camps.

## Colonization

Like the Czars before them, the Soviets set about a policy of Russification. The greater degree of communist control over everyday life combined with a policy of colonization made this new threat far more dangerous. Required Russian language classes were eventually lowered to the first grade. University students had to demonstrate competence in Russian language and literature, communist theory and history, as well as belong to the Komsomol (Communist Youth) which had members from 14 years of age to 28.

Many Russian teachers were brought in to instruct the youth of Estonia; few if any of these teachers could speak Estonian. These new teachers were brought in not only to undermine the native language in favor of Russian, but also sought to indoctrinate the Estonians in Soviet history and ideology. A new version of history was presented where the period of Estonian independence became a bourgeois dictatorship that had been overthrown by the Estonian proletariat. Under the ever present portrait of Stalin, children were taught that the "Great Father" had saved them from the fascists who were responsible for all the destruction wrought in Estonia during the war.

The truth that Estonia had been seized and brutalized by Stalin was obviously well known to the children's parents and grandparents, yet many feared telling their children the real events. A slip of the tongue in school could have dire consequences. The children, who knew their fathers to be in a gulag, dead or alive they often did not know, kept this information to themselves. The fear of divulging any personal information which could be used against you developed at an early age and has left a permanent stamp on the lives, attitudes, and behaviors of the generations raised in the Soviet system. This system successfully isolated individuals to the point where students in Stalin's time felt that they were the only ones who had a father in the gulag. It would not be until many decades later that one woman discovered her situation was true for one third of her classmates. The "teachers" who were trusted by the KGB knew all of their students' backgrounds and were not above using this information to prod students they deemed not diligent or dedicated enough. One can only imagine the effect on a grade school student whose father had died in a gulag when told by his or her teacher, "don't forget what happened to your father".

The death of Stalin in 1953 brought some relief for Estonia and the thousands of Estonians in gulags across Siberia and northern Russia. Many long-term sentences were reduced and the conditions in the gulags improved. The Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the inaction of the West when it was violently repressed made it clear that liberation from the West would not be forthcoming. As the last hopes for delivery from Soviet tyranny diminished, the Estonians learned to adjust to the harsh conditions imposed upon them. Estonia had been erased from the maps and became a small spot in the mass of red that was the Soviet Union.

The Estonians were able to passively resist the subjugation of their language by the Russians, but were unable to resist the mass colonization of their country. In 1945 the Estonians made up 94% of the population. From 1945 to 1950 alone the Soviets moved in 240,000 non-Estonians. By 1989 the Estonians made up only 61.5% of the population, with the Russians being the majority in Tallinn and Narva.

The mass influx of Russians into Estonia was spurred by the large-scale centrally planned industrialization. Gruesome looking factories and apartments were built across the country. The environment became despoiled and polluted to where swimming the beaches became hazardous. Large mounds of radioactive waste material dot the region of Kohtla Jarve as a by-product of shale mining. The process of urbanization produced concrete jungles of high-rise boxes. This same style was used in even the smallest of villages. Asbestos was used in large quantities long after its dangers were known in the West. The Soviet esthetic qualities of coloration and decoration assault the senses. A limited number of paint colors were produced and available, giving each city and village the same monotonous look. The interior decoration of all restaurants, hotels, and bars took on the odious Soviet penchant for brown and orange with large (brown or orange) curtains to produce a dark and depressing atmosphere. Surly doormen, bartenders, and waiters became little gods in this domain of slow service and poor food.

Travel to and from Estonia became restricted. Selectively few foreigners from the West could go to Tallinn. If they had relatives in the outside of Tallinn, they had to meet them in Tallinn. Foreigners were not allowed to stay in Tartu. It was a heavily restricted area with a large Soviet airbase on its outskirts. Locals were not permitted to climb to the top of the ruins of the old church (Toomkirik) which dominates the hill in central Tartu, because from there one could view the airbase. Large numbers of university students did it anyway to flout authority while drinking beer and vodka, as university students are apt to do.

Travel outside of Estonia was limited to the Soviet Union and its satellites. Only a select few could travel to the West. Travel within the Soviet Union was less restrictive than to Eastern Europe where a background check was required. One Estonian lost his travel privilege after visiting Poland because it was reported that he did not take the time to visit the Lenin Museum while there. Those who traveled to the West had to have a spotless record and a family to return to as a precaution against defection. Packages sent by relatives overseas were opened and were often missing items when it finally reached its destination. Some items were taken for ideological reasons, but most were simply stolen. The postal system was notorious for thefts.

## The Events In Moscow

The death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's repudiation of him publicly in 1956 brought an end to the physical terror and genocide, yet the political and psychological terror remained under the auspices of the KGB. The "Great Thaw" under Khrushchev made many hopeful for the future, but the reality would prove different. It was during Khrushchev's years that Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarians, the Berlin Wall was built, and foreign adventurism was started that led to the hottest period of the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Khrushchev had claimed that the Soviet Union had reached nuclear parity with the United States in 1960. He also claimed that in 20 years Soviet per capita income would be 80% higher than in the United States. Both claims would prove to be false. His backdown in Cuba proved that they had not reached nuclear parity and led to his downfall in 1964.

The somber and conservative Brezhnev replaced Khrushchev. A new Soviet policy and determination to never again be caught short in military capabilities grew out of their experience in Cuba. By 1968 the Soviet Union reached nuclear parity with the United States, while in the same year crushing the Czechoslovakian revolt. In contrast to the West which opted to rely on the cheaper deterrent of nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union invested heavily in both conventional and nuclear forces. This massive investment and buildup continued unabated throughout the 1970's and 1980's in spite of détente and the naive statements in the West that the Cold War was over. The economic growth of the Soviet Union allowed for their ability to provide guns and butter through the 1960's and 1970's, but by the end of the Brezhnev years it was clear that this could not continue without destroying the economy. The years of economic growth were coming to an end. Brezhnev was by this time senile and incapable of making the hard decisions necessary to avert the disaster. His next two successors, Chernenko and Andropov, simply continued in the same direction during their brief periods of time in charge. The Soviet ship of state was sailing straight into the rocks commanded by elderly captains with poor eyesight, and with sailors too intimidated to warn them.