

## **February 1, 1990**

### **USSR: Estonian Nationalism on the Rise**□□□

#### **Citation:**

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#### **Summary:**

An analysis of growing Estonian nationalism and Communist efforts to bolster Party support.

#### **Original Language:**

English

#### **Contents:**

Original Scan

3343

~~Top Secret~~

USSR:

**Estonian Nationalism on the Rise**

*A surge in public support in Estonia for political groups favoring aggressive pursuit of independence suggests that, after the republic election next month, the Estonian legislature will be pressed to advance a nationalist agenda as forcefully as the Lithuanians have.*

[redacted] a substantial increase recently in public support for radical nationalist groups, including the Estonian National Independence Party and the Estonian Heritage Society. So-called citizens' committees formed by those groups have reportedly registered more than 500,000 Estonians, who this month will elect delegates to an extragovernmental congress, scheduled for March, to discuss the future of the republic.

[redacted] the Estonian Communist Party is near collapse. [redacted] the umbrella Estonian Popular Front—which has favored a gradual push for independence, working through existing Soviet institutions—is losing its popularity and influence.

Tomorrow, the 70th anniversary of Bolshevik recognition of Estonian independence, the Front and the Communist Party are sponsoring a meeting of the republic's elected representatives that reportedly will serve to open the process of restoring Estonian sovereignty.

**Comment:** By calling tomorrow's meeting, the Communists and the Front hope to stem the erosion of their public support. The party has probably been doomed, however, by its reluctance to follow the Lithuanian party in splitting with Moscow and to embrace a nationalist agenda fully. Although Front candidates will probably capture most of the 105 seats in next month's election, the public mandate enjoyed by the citizens' committees will give them powerful leverage in pushing the new Estonian Supreme Soviet to hold an early referendum on the issue of independence and to seek negotiations with Moscow over the terms for secession.

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