

POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE REVOLUTION

THREE FACTIONS, ONE DREAM

1. **The Estonian Independence Party** was led by Lagle Parek and Tunne Kelam. Declaring Estonia to be a free nation under international law, they denied the legitimacy of the Soviet occupation. For the Estonian Independence Party (ENIP), there was to be absolutely no compromise with Estonia's Soviet occupiers. Negotiating with Gorbachev was not an option. Because of its bold stances, ENIP never attracted a large membership. Many Estonians supported the cause privately, but fears for their and their families' safety prevented them from openly supporting the party. ENIP's public members were mostly activists and former political prisoners, and the party never exceeded 1,000 members.
2. **The Popular Front** was led by Edgar Savisaar and Marju Lauristin. It was a movement developed by members of the Estonian Communist Party in response to Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika. Under the premise of supporting Gorbachev, the Popular Front wished to push the limits of Estonian freedoms, but to do so while remaining part of the Soviet Union. Some Popular Front leaders may actually have supported Communist rule, but most simply could not conceive of Soviet tanks ever leaving their country. Therefore, they decided to pursue as much freedom as they could under such circumstances. The Popular Front was enormously appealing, as it gave average Estonians a relatively safe means of expressing a desire for change without publicly threatening Soviet authorities.
3. **The Heritage Society** was led by Trivimi Velliste and Mart Laar. It was an organization that took advantage of glasnost to talk openly about history and culture. Although the Heritage Society's mission was not explicitly political, its members spoke frankly about the role that Stalin, deportations, and the Soviet occupation had played in Estonian history. One could say that they talked in code: Although they were ostensibly discussing history, everyone knew their real subject was politics and freedom. A few months after forming in December of 1987, the Heritage Society had 10,000 members.