

CHRONOLOGY OF THE REVOLUTION

1986 TO 1994

- **1986:** Non-approved environmental demonstrations concerning the development of phosphorite mines test the limits of glasnost.
- **August 23, 1987:** Political demonstration protesting the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact held in Tallinn's Hirve Park.
- **September 26, 1987:** *Edasi* newspaper publishes idea of an independent Estonian economy (IME) *within* the Soviet Union.
- **October 1987:** An Estonian flag is put up at a demonstration in the War of Independence cemetery in Voru. It is not taken down.
- **December 12, 1987:** Founding of the Estonian Heritage Society.
- **January 1988:** The Estonian National Independence Party is formed.
- **February 1988:** Demonstration in Tartu to commemorate the 1920 signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty with Lenin. The treaty recognized Estonia's independence and sovereignty and declared that the USSR would never interfere in Estonian affairs.
- **April 1–2, 1988:** Heritage Society demonstration in Tartu where blue, black, and white banners are flown.
- **April 1–2, 1988:** Cultural unions of Estonia meet and publicly make cautious references to freedom.
- **April 13, 1988:** Edgar Savisaar announces the formation of the Popular Front on Soviet television.
- **June 10–17, 1988:** Night song protests: a hundred thousand Estonians gather each night for a week to sing protest songs all night.
- **June 1988:** Gorbachev replaces hard-line Estonian Communist leader Karl Vaino with childhood friend and relative moderate Vaino Väljas.
- **July 1988:** Russian nationals living in Estonia form the Interfront to ensure the Soviet Union's rule there.
- **Summer–Fall 1988:** Organized primarily by the Heritage Society and the Independence Party, 860,000 Estonians sign a petition disavowing the legality of the Soviet occupation and declaring themselves citizens of the Republic of Estonia.
- **September 11, 1988:** Mass demonstration ("Eestimaa Laul") organized by the Popular Front. 300,000–400,000 people attend.
- **November 16, 1988:** The Estonian Supreme Soviet declares that Estonian laws have supremacy over laws from Moscow. Communist Party leaders are called to Moscow to be chastised by Gorbachev. Moscow declares the law unconstitutional.
- **January 1989:** The Estonian Supreme Soviet declares Estonian the national language of Estonia.
- **February 24, 1989:** Estonian flag is raised over Pikk Hermann Tower for the first time since Stalin took over Estonia in 1940.
- **August 23, 1989:** The Baltic Chain: more than one million Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians hold hands across 600 km to protest the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.
- **December 24, 1989:** In a dramatic political debate in Moscow, Gorbachev is forced to admit that secret clauses in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact led to the occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

- **February 24, 1990:** Those who signed the petition declaring themselves citizens of the Republic of Estonia hold an election for the Congress of Estonia.
- **March 11–12, 1990:** The Congress of Estonia meets for the first time in Tallinn. Gorbachev is not happy, but his policy of glasnost makes it politically difficult to stop the meeting.
- **March 18, 1990:** In a desperate concession to unrest in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev allows multi-candidate elections within the Communist system.
- **March 23–25, 1990:** The Estonian Communist Party splits. “Reform” Communists decide to form an independent Communist Party.
- **May 8, 1990:** The Estonian Supreme Soviet adopts the name “Estonian Republic” instead of “Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.”
- **May 15, 1990:** Interfront demonstrators storm the Estonian capital and threaten to take leaders hostage. The confrontation ends peacefully when Estonian citizens quickly assemble and calmly stand up to the demonstrators.
- **January 1991:** Soviets kill twenty peaceful demonstrators in Lithuania and Latvia. Hundreds more are wounded with machine gun fire and run over by tanks.
- **August 19–21, 1991:** Attempted *coup d'état* in Moscow by Communist Party hard-liners. Gorbachev taken under house arrest. Yeltsin leads opposition to the hard-liners.
- **August 20, 1991:** A joint vote of the Congress of Estonia and the Estonian Supreme Soviet (now the Estonian Supreme Council) officially restores the Republic of Estonia.
- **August 21, 1991:** The coup collapses in Moscow.
- **August 22, 1991:** Iceland becomes the first country to recognize Estonia as an independent nation.
- **September 2, 1991:** The United States becomes the thirty-second country to recognize Estonian independence.
- **September 6, 1991:** The Soviet Union (Russia) recognizes Estonian independence.
- **September 17, 1991:** Estonia admitted to the United Nations.
- **August 31, 1994:** The last Russian troops leave Estonia.