

**Comparative Perspectives on Political Mobilization by Russian Speakers at the
End of the Soviet Era**

: Case Studies of North East Estonia and Transnistria

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Introduction

The introduction of the Euro in 2011 illustrates that Estonia, having fulfilled Western legal and economic criteria, has steadily been making accomplishments as a fully-fledged member state of the European Union. The path that led Estonia to integration in European civilization over 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union was arduous. The issue of “minority” rights and the special status claimed by Russian speakers has been one of the most troublesome for the government of the newly established republic. From the perspective of domestic policy, a level of détente between the government and the ethnic minority was a primary indicator of maturity of democracy as an EU candidate state. Furthermore, from the perspective of international policy, the prioritization of the concerns of Russian speakers should be well-considered in order to maintain a favourable partnership with Russia, which is a major trading partner and Estonia’s main provider of natural resources, largely gas and oil.

The issue of Russian speakers in Estonia was first raised in October 1988, when democratic and ethnic movements became active in the Baltic states. Attempts to enact language laws which defined the language of the titular ethnic groups as the official language emerged in the Baltic countries, Moldova and Georgia from the middle of 1988. Philip Roeder et al. demonstrate that these political actions, guided by titular ethnic groups in each Union republic, inevitably stimulated a sense of rivalry in non-titular groups. The case of Estonia, especially, is the first example of ethnic tension between titular and non-titular groups surrounding the enactment of the language law (Roeder 1991, p. 223). Russian speakers, few of whom had mastered the Estonian language - a language of the titular ethnic group in Estonia - under the Soviet regime and most of whom feared that the introduction of the language law would lead to loss of their workplaces and opportunities for higher education, began to form protests against the language law planned by the committee of the Estonian Supreme Soviet. This protest later partially transformed into the political mobilization of Russian speakers in North East Estonia, largely in Narva city.

Ethnic and political mobilization by a non-titular ethnic group was not a wholly unique case in all of its dimensions, while it was in many ways unusual in the former Soviet Union. This case is a paragon of the Matrioshka structure of ethnic mobilization in the USSR; the titular ethnic groups of the Union republics had demanded higher autonomy or national “sovereignty” from Moscow, and the non-titular

population, reacting to the activities by the titular, also tried to achieve the same rights as them, not only wider autonomy but “sovereignty” (often referred to as “separation” from the republics) (Sato 2009). The case of Transnistria (Pridnestr or Transdniester) in Moldova outwardly resembles the case of Estonia in terms of the fact that Russian speakers conducted mobilization in the highly-developed industrial zone.¹ The two cases showed similarities at the initial phase, but showed dissimilarities at the latter stage, after the 1991 August Coup in particular. In the case of Estonia, the political leaders of the Russian speakers chose mobilization as the domestic reform action for the improvement of minority rights, in accordance with the Estonian constitution and international laws; while in the case of Moldova, the political upheaval developed into a violent outcome and moved towards a “separatism” act from the Republic of Moldova. The main cause of the different directions of the two cases is that each political actor who led the mobilizations had controlled different types and amounts of resources. This paper, using the resource mobilization theory, will analyze what factors drove the minority language speakers to organize social mobilization, and clarify the reason why the political actors of the Russian speakers in the case of North East Estonia finally chose to seek political dialogue with the Estonian government, unlike those of Transnistria.

Previous studies on the issue of Russian speakers in Estonia can be sorted into two groups: those concerning legal policy toward further EU affiliation (Andersen 1999, pp. 89 - 143) and those concerning social policy for regional stabilization in North East Estonia as an EU member state (Brednikova 2007, pp. 43 - 64; Mertelsmann 2005, pp. 43 - 58; Smith 2002, pp. 89 - 110; Vetik 1993, pp. 271 - 280). There are a few articles published in the field of ethnic studies dealing with the end of the Soviet period, which was a crucial and decisive time for the future direction of independent states in particular. Graham Smith and Andrew Wilson conducted a comparative analysis of ethnic mobilization between the case of Ukraine and the case of Estonia during the period of the decline of the Soviet regime. They asserted that the two major preceding research papers, which had analyzed policy-making from the viewpoint of the government and focused on the ethnic mobilization process from the viewpoint of the grassroots activists, did not manage to demonstrate the dynamics of reciprocal or interactive actions among policy-makers and grassroots activists (Smith & Wilson 1997, pp. 846 - 847). Despite this assertion, however, Smith and Wilson did not always successfully combine the two angles. In order to rectify that point, this paper attempts to illustrate the dynamics of interactive actions, between the governmental side and the local side, which were influenced towards the accelerating and restraining of political mobilization by the non-titular ethnic group.

The case of political mobilization of Russian speakers in Estonia consisted of a mixture of central and periphery conflict, and titular and non-titular conflict. Moreover, the proportions of this mixture were not maintained evenly throughout the process. At the beginning of the conflict, tendencies of ethnic

¹ The key political actors in North East Estonia, such as Vladimir Chuikin, had also referred to the case of Transnistria several times in order to seek the direction of political action (Smith 2002b, p. 95).

conflict were strong. The first section of this paper, as an introduction to the main body, demonstrates the effectiveness of resource mobilization in order to verify the case of collective action by Russian speakers in North East Estonia. The second section looks into resource-related factors which drove Russian speakers to organize political protests against Estonian radicalism and “predominant policy” for the titular ethnic group promoted by Estonian central government. The second section also focuses on regional characteristics and attribution for political mobilization in North East Estonia.

1. The viewpoint of resource mobilization

This section begins by defining several terminologies before the main discussion. Firstly, the area referred to as “North East Estonia” should be clarified. North East Estonia, unlike Transnistria, did not have clear demarcation that administratively or geographically could distinguish from central area of the union republic. The political movement by Russian speakers chiefly formed in Tallinn and other major cities in the northeast region of Estonia: Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve. This hardly illustrates a demarcation of “North East Estonia”, as the neighboring small cities and villages in the vicinity of the three northeastern cities did not show clear intentions to join a self-proclaimed autonomous area through some key political actors of the Russian speakers. This situation, which seemed to involve a lack of political foothold and action policy plan in an uncertain space, was in clear contrast to that of the autonomous movements in Transnistria that had had high durability in a fixed area. However, it is a fact that the northeast region of Estonia consisted of a particular economic zone centered around an industrial complex of oil shale, as proposed in the scheme of the regional self-management program in North East Estonia. The local politicians in that area seem to be conscious of a specific “imagined” demarcation as a predominantly Russian region, seen in the fact that the city Soviets of the three cities organized “the united Soviet (Council) of North East Estonia.”² Therefore, this paper defines the area that includes Narva, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve and neighboring cities as North East Estonia, for the sake of convenience.

The second term in need of definition is “Russians” or “Russian speakers.” Russians and Russian speakers in Estonia as well as in Moldova occupy a higher percentage of the regional population in North East Estonia and Transnistria respectively, and were leading figures of political mobilization among non-titular ethnic groups. According to the Transnistrian statistic of 1992, Russian speakers made up over 70 % of the population in Tiraspol, a central city in Transnistria (Russians 41.3 %, Ukrainians 32.2 % and Moldovans, the titular ethnic group in Moldova, 17.7 %) (Bomeshko 1993, p. 37). Furthermore, the Estonian census of 1989 shows that Russian speakers constituted 89.0 % of

² Interview with Vladimir Chuikin, Former Chairman of the Narva City Soviet and CEO of the Chuikin Group, Narva, 2011. 03. 20.

Narvan citizens (Russians 85.9 %, Ukrainians 3.2 %, Belarusians 2.7 % and Estonians, the titular ethnic group, 4.0 %) (*Rahvastiku Uhtlusarvutatud Sundmus* 2002, pp. 146 - 147). The difficulty of making a distinction between Russians, “Russian speakers” and “speakers of Slavic languages” comes from the fact that quite a few non-Estonians endorsed or joined the movement for protecting the rights of “Russian speakers.” The reasons for this were (1) the ethnic identity of “speakers of Slavic languages” or “Russian speakers” had become relatively weaker, largely among families of interethnic marriages in city areas, (2) the Russian language, even among some non-Russians, had gained predominance as their daily means of communication in workplaces, educational establishments and households, and (3) many non-Estonians and some Estonians who had feared rapid institutional conversion preferred to maintain a Russian-speaking environment. Therefore “an ethnic mobilization by Russians” would be misleading about the essentials of the movements in North East Estonia. This article discusses the political mobilization in North East Estonia and Transnistria, defining the movements by Russian speakers.

As a next step after these terminological definitions, let us consider the effectiveness of the resource mobilization theory in order to analyze these cases. North East Estonia and Transnistria, unlike the Abkhazia Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast in the Georgian SSR, did not possess regional autonomy within the union republics. Theories of the Soviet ethno-federalism and institutional mobilization hardly apply to these cases, because North East Estonia and Transnistria are different administrative status from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which sought a way to achieve greater autonomy and expand the political rights of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Moscow (George 2009, pp. 29 – 33). Therefore, theories of sociology are a more effective way to approach ethnic and social movements accompanied by strikes, demonstrations, riots and so forth, than political science methodology.

According to the theory of resource mobilization, increasing discontent and complaints of minority groups towards existing political institutions do not always become a decisive factor in their collective action against it. Without space for exchanging opinion and forming group opinion through consensus with others, most of their grievances are highly likely to end as “personal irritation.” Therefore, public opinion must go through the process of development from declaration of personal intent to consensus among members of the minority group (Tarrow 1994, p. 20). Social networks such as social organizations and political parties take on the significant role of offering a space for exchanging member’s opinions (Tarrow 1994, p. 21). Under the circumstances of flourishing democratic and nationalistic movements at the end of the USSR, newly established social organizations assisted the expansion of that kind of space, rather than the existing communist party or Soviet. For instance, Popular Front forces, representative social organizations mostly formed by titular ethnic groups in the union republics, became leading figures for opening political dialogue between nations and republican authorities in Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Baltic countries and others. This movement, led by

titular groups, also affected the motivation of non-titular groups. Two factions, Intermovement in North East Estonia and Edinstvo in Transnistria took the leading roles in promoting political mobilization of Russian speakers and non-titular groups. Such newly established social organizations functioned as a relay station of the Russian speakers' community. Therefore, despite discussing a sort of "nationalism," this paper defines not ethnic groups or individuals, but social organizations and their members as being the primary actors of mobilization.

It is certain that newly established social organizations were major actors, although they inevitably needed to build reliable and cooperative relationships with the existing political body, because the Soviet regime did not consent to organize massive acts such as mass meetings, political strikes, boycotts and so on. Tsutomu Shiohara (1989, pp. 4 - 5) remarks that a social network completed by an existing organization could fulfil an important role in collective action. In terms of existing organizations, new social organizations in North East Estonia and Transnistria had firmly relied on support in various fields from local Soviets and communist parties. Furthermore, many of these organizations consisted of the local communist party's members and Soviet representatives. Physical and mental backing from the existing political bodies enabled these new organizations to avoid direct pressure from the Soviet authorities, and mass activities were relatively carried out without a hitch.

Political leaders and executive committees of social organizations mandated by members had to consider a balance between cost and profit of recruiting participants of mass movement. Mobilization itself costs a great deal (Tilly 1978, p. 87), and if leaders judge that cost exceeds profit, they tend to pass up opportunities for mobilization (Tilly 1978, p. 98). In other words, rational choice regarding the consequences for the balance sheet often affects their final decision. However, in some exceptional cases, such as the cases of North East Estonia, the Lithuanian Poles and the Gagauz in Moldova, leaders decided to motivate large numbers of people despite a lack of expected resources and seemingly high cost (Sato 2009; Roeder 1991, p. 212). Sidney Tarrow (1994, p. 18, 96, 99), underlining the appearance of political opportunity as a trigger of revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989, argues that state structures create stable opportunities, but it is changing opportunities within states that provide the openings that resource-poor actors can use to create new movements. In this case, there are two possibilities why resource-poor groups decide to act. One is "investment action", in which political leaders could later recover their losses from prospective resources, and the other is "erroneous action", in which they could misunderstand the quantity and quality of their resources. I argue that the case of North East Estonia is categorized as the latter, for the reason that the Russian speakers had counted too much on regional economic potentiality and external support from the Russian Federation and Moscow.

North East Estonia and Transnistria, highly industrialized areas in the republics, were more blessed with basic resources in terms of a steady source of funding supply than the regions of the Gagauz and Lithuanian Poles (Sato 2009, pp. 152 - 153). However there is a clear contrast between North East

Estonia and Transnistria: in the first place, a different degree of control over resources which specific social organizations obtained and maintained. Success or failure of retained mobilization depends more on the level of effective control of resources than on the amount of resources (Tilly 1978, p. 78). A high possibility of delivering many resources of different kinds, in any case, reveals great loyalty of members and high efficiency of mobilization (Tilly 1978, p. 70). Therefore, the result of mass movements depends on fast completion of networks for supplying resources.

On the basis of that point, the next section discusses why North East Estonia, in spite of possessing rich resources, could not go as far as the formation of an autonomous entity, because of weak will among political actors and local inhabitants, and low function of resource supply despite high potential.

2. Regional potential in North East Estonia for political mobilization

This section begins by defining the term “resource”, for later discussion. Rich amounts of resources enable the members of participants in collective action to reap rewards. According to the theory of resource mobilization, these types of resources do not only indicate physical resources like funding and natural resources, but also mental support. The definition of “resource” has not yet attained consensus among scholars and scientists. Smith and Wilson (1997, pp. 854 - 856) present a list of resources: (1) sense of communal relatedness, (2) presence of a cultural intelligentsia, (3) organizational structure, (4) mass media and (5) ethnic patrons. Hale (2000, pp. 33 - 36), although he does not specifically use the term “resource”, enumerates several factors promoting separatism as a concept close to resources: (6) regional wealth, (7) regional autonomy, (8) ethnic distinctiveness, (9) group skill sets, (10) elite upward mobility, (11) historical symbolic resources and (12) demonstration effects. Single resources, although perhaps not the most influential among other factors, would not be a decisive factor, but the composition of these as a collective power becomes an impelling force of mobilization. (1), (8) and (12) had rather less influence in the cases of North East Estonia and Transnistria, because the leading social organizations were more likely to try to restrain nationalistic slogans and activities in order to stress their different political agenda from the Estonian and Moldovan Popular Front. The core motivation of these movements was not based on competitive action with Estonian and Moldovan radical nationalism, but on reactive action. Thus, this paper will not discuss points (1) and (12). Most actors included in social organizations led by the titular ethnic group had access to (4), and actors in North East Estonia and Transnistria did not possess (7), so these factors cannot be identified as primary factors and are also omitted from this discussion. Considering these remarks and the author’s previously published articles (Sato 2009, pp. 147 - 156), this section, based on aforementioned (2), (3), (5), (6), (9) and (11), will verify the following resources: (1)

regional population density and ethnic composition, (2) regional industrial potential, (3) organizational structure, (4) political leaders' upward mobility, (5) validity of doctrine and slogans, (6) effective utilization of events, (7) pressure from inside the community, (8) pressure from outside.

2-1. Regional population density and ethnic composition

Considering the existence of spaces which enable groups to hold large scale meetings in order to be seen by local inhabitants in public, and close distances which make it possible to build communication networks among members, the growth level of cities and high population density are two of the most important and basic indicators for the management of political mobilization. In the case of North East Estonia and Transnistria, although some motivation was directed at forming regional autonomy, most of the activities concentrated on the urban area. Therefore it is more accurate to research the collective actions, not in the whole area including rural areas, but in urban areas as a priority.

Footholds in the social movement by Russian speakers in Estonia exist in three cities: Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve. According to the 1989 census, Narva had 81,221 inhabitants, Kohtla-Järve had 77, 316 and Sillamäe 23,931. As a rough estimate of the populations of the main cities in Transnistria in that year, Tiraspol had 202,900 inhabitants, Tigina (Bender) 144,000, Slobozia 112,100, Rîbnița 96,600, Grigoriopol 54,000 and Camenca 36,600 (Bomeshko 1993, p. 37). Thus it is obvious that the main cities in North East Estonia were much smaller in scale than those in Transnistria. The size of the population related to spatial conditions such as halls, parks and squares for demonstrations and rallies as well as hiding places from security forces inside buildings.

Moreover, it shows a much clearer contrast between the two cases from the viewpoint of the wider area, chiefly the city network. The territory of Transnistria is a long and narrow one from north-northwest to south-southeast along the Nistru River, and has convenient access between cities along the M4 trunk road. The existence of the Nistru River functions as a natural border between Chisinau and Tiraspol, and enables Transnistria to compose a single unit of the separated area from the right bank of Moldova. This 4,200 square kilometer area had a population of almost 750,000 in 1989. North East Estonia, unlike Transnistria, cannot easily be called a single particular area. Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve are located from east to west along the E20 trunk road. Unlike Transnistria, there is no clear natural border which divides them from the Estonian mainland. Also, there are many villages along the E20 between the three main cities, whose inhabitants did not act in concert with the political mobilization by Russian speakers. The concept and name of the "Transnarvan Soviet Socialist Republic" existed, but such an area did not yet exist in reality. The total population of the three cities was about 100,000, which amounted to one seventh of the population of Transnistria. The network between cities in North East Estonia was fragile. The three main cities formed a single economic zone, but there are 25 kilometers from Narva to Sillamäe and 30 kilometers from Sillamäe

to Kohtla-Järve. In contrast, Tiraspol, the largest city in Transnistria, and Tigina, the second, are situated just 4 kilometers from the Nistru River, and it is obvious that North East Estonia faced more obstacles to having a means of physical and human communication for promoting the political mobilization.

Let us compare the ethnic distribution in the cities. 93.1 % (Ethnic Russians 85.9 %) of Narva citizens were Russian speakers and 4.0 % spoke Estonian, whereas in Sillamäe the proportions were 80.5 % (86.4 %) and 3.2 % respectively; in Kohtla-Järve, they were 75.6 % (64.7 %) and 20.9 %.³ North East Estonia had a higher percentage of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers than Transnistria but the high density did not always bring benefits for promoting political mobilization. Firstly, the Russians in the Baltic countries are diverse in terms of working conditions and historical and religious backgrounds, and did not always have a common identity as “Russians.” In particular, some Russians who were raised in Estonia kept an identity as Baltic Russians, who have a long history as native inhabitants in the area along the Baltic Sea and do not share a common identity with other “Russians” in the Russian Federation (Smith 2002b, p. 91). Therefore it is hard to conflate them with Russians who migrated to Estonia as engineers and specialists in particular fields after the Soviet annexation. Vetik (1993, p. 272) argues that one of the reasons why the Baltic Russians formed a different identity from other Russians was their relatively higher living standards compared to other regions of the USSR. The Russian speakers in Estonia did not wish to leave Estonia, and emphasized their own history as a native group who had a right to settle down there. This diversity in the Russian speakers in Estonia became a cause of low solidarity toward political mobilization.

The indicators of higher standards of living in a particular region also affect the forming of regional identity over ethnic identity. In the case of Transnistria, inhabitants on the left bank of the Nistru River had a higher standard of living than on the right bank, where the majority of residents are Moldovans. They recognized that they lived in more affluent circumstances than any other region in Moldova. Russian speakers as well as Moldovans shared a common regional identity as inhabitants in Transnistria (“Transnistrians”) or as working class at the factory. Therefore, the Transnistrian political leaders in social mobilization had emphasized the movement as being for the rights of workers, not for the rights of ethnic Russians or Russian speakers. This propaganda in the case of Transnistria finally resulted in a positive effect on the maintenance of collective action after the USSR collapsed.

2-2. Regional industrial potential

From a physical perspective, to control a highly industrialized area means to heighten the potential to supply basic resources such as funds to members, and from a mental perspective, its control not only strengthens the loyalty of members but poses a threat to opponents and competitors. North East Estonia and Transnistria were highly industrialized regions in the Estonian SSR and Moldovan SSR

³ This number is calculated by the 1989 Soviet census in Estonia.

respectively, but each region had a different industrial structure. North East Estonia was based on an industrial complex centering on oil shale produced on the coast of the Baltic Sea. Kohtla-Järve had a well-developed petrochemical industry, and Sillamäe possessed a thermal power plant and uranium refinery as the center of electric power supply in Estonia. Narva, a port town, had and has two main industries: the Eesti Power Plant (now, the Balti Power Plant), which produced 95 % of the electric supply in Estonia, and a textile industrial complex at Kreenholm. One tenth of Narvan citizens belonged to these factories (*Rahvusvaheline seminar* 2002, p. 134). The Kreenholm plant seemed to have the most potential to acquire foreign currency among all industries in North East Estonia, but eventually could not compete with efficient foreign trade in the same field after Estonian independence.

Transnistria occupied 13 % of the territory, 17 % of the republic's population, 37 % of industrial products (Babilunga & Bomeshko 1998, p. 19) and 90 % of the electricity supply of the MSSR.⁴ There are two main electric power plants, a hydro electronic power plant along the Cuciurgan Limanul, and a thermal power plant in Dubossari. Transnistria, even after the armed conflict in 1992, successfully kept highly competitive industry at an international level. The Rîbnița steel plant was made with the then most advanced refinery system in January 1985 and has traditionally accounted for between 40 to 50 % of Transnistria's GDP. Some factories, in the fields of the leather industry in Tigina and the wine industry in Tiraspol, also manufactured high quality products at an international level. Control over well-balanced heavy, light and agricultural industries in Transnistria provided enough resources for promoting political mobilization toward independence from Moldova.

In the case of Transnistria, most entrepreneurs in the major cities supported political organizations, which promoted the idea of regional autonomy, economic independence and political separation from Chișinău (Sato 2009, pp. 155 - 156). This shows that self-determination of economy and politics was more attractive for entrepreneurs than subordination to central Moldova. On the contrary, most entrepreneurs in North East Estonia opposed partaking in political mobilization in their area (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 08. 11; *Narvskii Rabochii*, 1990. 05. 24), so employers and employees could not effectively organize joint struggles under the name of Russian speakers or the worker's class. They hesitated because the entrepreneurs sought more for personal gain and their own company's profit than political power and mass interest.

The industrial potential can be also measured by the level of educational institutions which produce human resources. Tiraspol had Prednester State University, which was formed as the Institute of Public Education of Moldova in October 1930. Conversely, Narva city did not have an influential institution to produce regional political leaders until forming the Narva branch school of Tartu University in 1999. In North East Estonia there was a lack of intellectuals among the Russian speakers

⁴ Another source showed the percentage of energy supply from Transnistria as 98.5 % (Chinn & Roper 1995, p. 16).

who could become the brains of collective action, while the Estonian Popular Front in Tallinn and Tartu had rich human resources such as lawyers, economists and journalists (Muiznieks 1995, p. 5). Furthermore, entrepreneurs and factory managers who joined the political mobilization in North East Estonia did not take a leading role, because they preferred not to engage in group rights by improving the social and political status of Russian speakers, but instead chose to seek individual profit as representatives of companies (Smith & Wilson 1997, p. 857).

2-3. Organizational structure

When surveying the case of the Sakha Republic in Russia, the existence of plenty of rich mineral resources does not seem to be a decisive factor for independence in this particular territory. This case shows that it is necessary for regional and territorial autonomy and independence to have authority figures and groups who can discover the available physical and mental resources for mobilization. The case of mobilization by a single social organization is rare. In the author's previous research (Sato 2009, p. 154), only the Gagauz autonomous movement was conducted by the largest group, the Gagauz Halkı, but the other movements, such as the autonomous movement by the Lithuanian Poles and the Russian speakers in Transnistria, consisted of more than two leading political and social groups. These various groups had different political directions and platforms, and frequently were either opposed to or cooperated toward regional autonomy and independence. This fusion and fragmentation among social organizations was a cause of vicissitudes of mobilization. On the basis of the aforementioned industrial and democratic features in North East Estonia, this section verifies the composition and relationships of the social organizations which had led the political mobilization.

The newly established social organizations such as Intermovement, United Council of Worker's Collectives in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (OSTK-n⁵) and the strike committee, and the existing political structures such as the association of veterans of the Soviet Army and City Soviets in Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve, were leading figures of the political mobilization in the case of Russian speakers in Estonia (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 05. 25). These organizations did not always act in the same place at the same time by the same members. Intermovement was one of the most influential bodies as a representative of Russian speakers and the non-titular ethnic group in North East Estonia and Tallinn. Intermovement, as well as Edinstvo in Transnistria, was opposed to the introduction of the Estonian language as the official state language, and the citizen's law, by which only people who had permanently resided in ESSR for a long time had the right to vote in elections and demanded the formation of a "bilingual structure (Russian as an interethnic language and mother tongue)." Tallinn was one of the primary bases of Intermovement. Its main Congresses, the first Congress on 4th March 1989 and the second on 23rd May, took place in Tallinn. The other influential

⁵ There was OSTK with the same title in Transnistria, which promoted political mobilization by Russian working class. This paper defines the OSTK acted in North East Estonia as OSTK-n and the OSTK in Transnistria as OSTK-t, for the sake of convenience.

body was OSTK-n. OSTK-n was organized as a representative group of the working class of the Russian speakers in North East Estonia. At the time of establishment, the top priority of the political programme was opposition to the introduction of the language law. OSTK-n was mainly active in Narva, which was home to the Eesti Electric Power Plant. From the viewpoint of ethnic composition, Russian speakers formed the vast majority of the members in Intermovement and OSTK-n,⁶ but they were more likely not to emphasize ethnic elements in order to foster solidarity among members. Chernavtsev remarked that they refrained from solidarity between Russians in order to avoid their activities being confused with the *Pamiat'*, which was inclined toward radical nationalism for Russians (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 12).

The result of a questionnaire demonstrated that OSTK-n and Intermovement were not actively supported by the non-titular ethnic group and Russian speakers. Even at the most tense moment between titular and non-titular groups and the most active phase of "Estonian nationalism" in April 1989, about 30 % of non-Estonians did not support the activities of OSTK-n (Smith 2002a, p. 49). In the First Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR in May 1989, 27 candidates supported by the Estonian Popular Front were elected among 36 seats, while only 5 from OSTK-n and Intermovement were elected. Considering the 48.5 % of non-Estonians in the 1989 census, a gain of 13.9 % of the representative's seats for OSTK-n and Intermovement was outstandingly small. The Russian speakers and non-Estonians preferred candidates who emphasized rights as Russian speakers to those who insisted on reforming the Republic Communist Party (Smith 2002a, pp. 49 - 50).

Both organizations did not always have a broad support from the youth of the Russian speakers, either. In the first congress of Intermovement there were many entrepreneurs as well as veterans who had supported political strikes against Tallinn, while there were few young people (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 14). The young Russian speakers were not attracted to meetings of Intermovement, at which veterans and army officers had repeatedly emphasized Soviet heritage such as the victory of the Great Patriotic War and the "freedom" of the Baltic states from Fascism. This condition was in clear contrast to the meetings of the Estonian Popular Front, which had directed peaceful demonstration such as singing revolution and human chains. Ivanov, a member of Intermovement, feared that Intermovement could not be maintained as a core social movement without young participants (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 10).

In the middle of 1990, OSTK-n and Intermovement were gradually declining in power. The main cause of the weakened Intermovement as representatives of non-titular groups was conflict and splits between members of the executive committee. In October 1990, three members of Intermovement, Vladimir Kimetes, Iulie Ruidiak and Vladimir Vinogradov, were dismissed for "losing the trust of members and personal interference into the financial sector" by the co-chairmen of the executive

⁶ In the Intermovement there were 572 Russians, 78 Ukrainians, 38 Belarusians, 22 Jewish and 11 Estonians among 742 representative members (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 05).

committee. Kogan, one of the founders of Intermovement, insisted that Mikhail Doroshkevich, who had led the campaign to remove them from their post, did not have any right to decide such a thing and described him as a “fifth column” who tried to destroy Intermovement from inside (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 10. 25). This conflict had a negative impact on the society as a leading group and spokes-organization for non-titular groups and Russian speakers. The decline of OSTK-n also accelerated in the middle of 1990. On 9th June 1990, there were fewer banners with political messages and propaganda, and fewer supporters at the meeting of OSTK-n. Vladimir Iarovoi, a representative of Intermovement, recognized that exacerbating relationships between Estonians and the Russian speakers, had resulted in the fact that the number of participants from the working class was at a low ebb (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 06. 12). After that period, OSTK-n aimed at developing and promoting the social and economic standards of Russian speakers in North East Estonia, in ways such as development of educational institutions, establishment of a printing house, inauguration of radio and TV stations, and had broken away from being an opposition body against the Estonian Popular Front and the Estonian government. OSTK-n and Intermovement, unlike the case of Transnistria in which OSTK-t succeeded to create their own regional network and possessed main posts of regional and city Soviets as their own property (Ciobanu 2008, p. 78), could not become a cohesive power for Russian speakers in North East Estonia.

In this respect, the social organizations in Transnistria definitely took a leading role in developing regional political power. OSTK-t in Transnistria was formed on 11th August 1989, just before the introduction of the language law in the Supreme Soviet of MSSR (Babilunga 2000, p. 150). A week after forming, OSTK-t proclaimed a joint purpose with the strike committee at the time of the committee’s establishment. This cooperation is in clear contrast to how OSTK-n in Estonia, which was formed in October 1988, decided to support the opinion of the Strike Committee in March 1989. OSTK-t in Transnistria acted swiftly to ensure close cooperation with city and regional Soviets, and city and regional communist parties in the middle of 1990. On 2nd June 1990, the leading figures of OSTK-t formed a super regional and organizational meeting as the first Transnistrian Congress of plenipotentiary delegations in Parkani.⁷ The second congress on 2nd September 1990 later became the basis of the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet. OSTK-t members who were originally entrepreneurs of the industrial complex occupied leading positions such as the chairman of the Soviet, the Cabinet ministers and the President, and ensured a high possibility of mobilising the region’s inhabitants. Ceslav Ciobanu (2008, p. 78) argues that OSTK-t cleverly succeeded to make a supportive social network in Transnistria, and in effect possessed Transnistria as their own property. Fusion between OSTK-t and existing regional political bodies was accelerating in Transnistria, while newly formed social organizations hardly cooperated with the existing political bodies and had been forming

⁷ The Tiraspol city Soviet, the Bender city Soviet, the Dubossari city Soviet, the Rîbnița city Soviet, the Dubossari regional Soviet, the Ribunita regional Soviet and Slobozia regional Soviet joined to the congress (*Dnestrovskaya Pravda*, 1990. 06. 05).

alliances and ruptures in North East Estonia. The effective function of social organizations is one of the clear differences between the political mobilization cases of North East Estonia and Transnistria.

2-4. Political leaders' upward mobility

Unlike the case of the conflict in Yugoslavia, individual figures did not instigate people, utilising ethnic symbols in the cases of North East Estonia and Transnistria. However it is necessary to have a symbolic and central figure when promoting social mobilization, and there were certain political leaders in both cases.

The outstanding figure and political leader in the case of North East Estonia was Evgeni Kogan, who was a deputy of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR and an engineer in the Baltic ship-repair factory. He was a well-known person in North East Estonia and regions where Russian speakers were predominant, and his appearance in the meetings of Intermovement and the Labour's Union were welcomed with thunderous applause (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 05. 25; *Narvsky Rabochii*. 1990. 01. 20). However, Kogan did not create a base of political activities in North East Estonia. He had several times visited North East Estonia in order to survey the opinions of Russian speakers and transfer their voice to Moscow, but his main battlefield was in Tallinn or Moscow. Kogan had received negative opinions on the IME (*Isemajandav Eesti* - Self-Managing Estonia, promoted by the executive members of the Popular Front of Estonia) in terms of economic independence from Moscow and "irrelevant" distribution of salary, but could not completely negate the concept for promoting economic development in Estonia (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 25). He was opposed to any kind of decision or laws from the Supreme Soviet and the Cabinet Minister, such as the language law, citizenship law or law regarding the national symbol, that might be a first step toward secession from the Soviet Union (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 05. 25). The city Soviet members in North East Estonia evaluated him as one of the representatives of Russian speakers who had the potential to convey their message to Moscow (Interview with Chuikin).

In the case of Transnistria, Igor Smirnov, current president of the *Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika*, had taken political initiative since the early stage of the mobilization. Smirnov was not a common company employee like Kogan, but a director of the Elektomash that was based in Tiraspol. He was elected as chairman of OSTK-t with overwhelming support from entrepreneurs and the working class. Smirnov, unlike Kogan who was based in Tallinn and Moscow, chiefly acted in Tiraspol and other cities in Transnistria. The super-regional congress, which consisted of a confluence of social organizations and existing regional and city Soviets, reinstated him as the chairman of the congress. His position as a leader of Transnistria became solidified by his arrest and imprisonment by the Moldovan authorities after the failure of the 1991 August Coup in Moscow. The department of the Interior, without any official arrest warrant, coercively arrested Smirnov, who had professed in favor of the Committee of the State of Emergency. Transnistrian local inhabitants vehemently protested

against his unlawful arrest and the Women's Association of Transnistria conducted a sit-in protest on the arterial railway from Odessa to Chisinau demanding his freedom from imprisonment. In consequence, this affair made Smirnov a central figure against Chisinau and served to strengthen political struggle against Chisinau by Transnistrians. Smirnov's strong leadership successfully mobilized Transnistrian inhabitants in order to strengthen its collective action. This career development of Smirnov is a clear difference from how Kogan, who acted in Moscow, lost his status in North East Estonia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2-5. Validity of doctrine and slogans

Attractive slogans and persuasiveness toward members is necessary for effective function of social organizations and efficient political mobilization. The fundamental motivation at the time of the establishment of Intermovement and OSTK-n was based on reactive nationalism against the Estonian Popular Front and the Estonian Congress. Their assertions, which were to criticize the Estonian nationalism promoted by Estonian radicals and demand the same rights as the titular group, were less attractive than that of the Estonian Popular Front, which had set forth democratization and peaceful protest. According to the programme of Intermovement, the IME scheme was based on the idea of "dismissal" from jobs and "deportation" of the Russian speakers from the republic (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 13), and the citizenship law, a discriminative law, intended to give priority to only "Estonian natives", expected by the majority as ethnic Estonians (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 13). In response to the Intermovement claims, the Estonian government stressed that the language law did not have any intention to limit the Russian language conditions in society and workplaces, or restrain cultural activities for Russians (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 14). Furthermore, the government stated that the citizenship law did not depend on race, faith or anything else for acquiring citizenship and also would not hinder stays in Estonia for holders of foreign nationality (here, mainly citizens of the USSR) (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1990. 02. 10). In response, however, Intermovement and OSTK-n could not show persuasive counterarguments.

Although some politicians in North East Estonia had promoted regional autonomy, local inhabitants, unlike the case of Transnistria, did not necessarily uphold this idea. Members of the executive committee of Intermovement and OSTK-n several times referred to a scheme for autonomy. In an unofficial meeting of the delegation from North East Estonia with Lafiq Nishanov, the chairman of the Soviet Nationalities (a presiding officer of that chamber of the USSR Supreme Soviet), in the Kremlin, they strongly opposed the secession of Estonia from the USSR and at the same time conveyed their desire to retain some Soviet republic as a successor of the Estonian SSR (GARF, I. 102). The congress of Intermovement, in March 1989, proposed a scheme of autonomy. Oleg Morozov, a executive member of Intermovement, suggested that the particular regions in which Russian speakers accounted for over 40 % of the population should have some autonomy, in order to strengthen

opposition power against Estonian nationalism, and especially referred to the possibility of gaining regional autonomy in North East Estonia, where the Russian speakers accounted for 70 to 90 % (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 10). Furthermore, Chernavtsav proposed that North East Estonia should build regional autonomy without avoiding conflict with Tallinn (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 12). Article fifteen of the final appeal of Intermovement confirmed their support for the idea of regional autonomy based in North East Estonia, within the framework of the Estonian SSR (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 13). However, during the process of discussion, some members expressed the view that autonomy would not bring a constructive method for easing ethnic tension (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 03. 07). In February 1990, the twentieth plenary session of the Narva City Soviet confirmed that regional autonomy had not yet gained support among Soviet members and local inhabitants in North East Estonia and it was too early to decide (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1990. 02. 24). According to a questionnaire in June 1991, 87 % of inhabitants in Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve were against the secession of North East Estonia from the Republic of Estonia (Smith 2002b, p. 94). Although politicians had promoted autonomy, that idea could not gain consensus among people in North East Estonia. These circumstances showed that social organizations could hardly maintain consistent policy, and became one of the causes of decline of political mobilization in North East Estonia.

2-6. Effective utilization of events

In the case of Transnistria, events such as political strikes, mass political rallies, “state funerals” of victims of armed conflict in October 1990, and the imprisonment of Smirnov had strengthened the support of the local inhabitants toward leading figures of the political mobilization. Nikolai Babilunga argues that the political strike against the language law could not achieve its ultimate aim, but assisted to strengthen solidarity among people in Transnistria (Babilunga 1998, p. 151; *Dnestrovskaya Pravda*, 1990. 01. 16). In the case of Estonia, the political strike was solely led by the strike committee, and OSTK-n was not directly involved in it. Iarovoi, then chairman of OSTK-n, was generally opposed (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 07. 25), but some members of OSTK-n such as Morozov supported cooperation with the strike committee and conduct a political strike (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 08. 11). Therefore, the opinion of members was not always united. On 21st and 24th July 1990, the political strike was carried out, demanding the dissolution of the Congress of Estonia as it showed tendency to radicalism and election law (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 07. 22; .1989. 07. 25). The working class employed in the radio manufacturing factory, transport organizations, and the Elektrotehnika in Tallinn, and several factories in Kohtla-Järve, joined the strike (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 08. 12; 1989. 08. 15; 1989. 08. 19). At the same time, there were acts of opposition against the strike. For instance, 500 among 2000 employees in the Elektrotehnika were opposed (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 08. 11). The director of the Baltic ship-repairing factory generally

opposed the strike and insisted on a one-day protest, even if the majority of employees supported it (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 08. 11). In 1990 most entrepreneurs gave negative opinions on the use of strike as a means of political protest (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1990. 05. 24). On 23rd May 1990, the meeting of the united Soviet decided that political protest would continue, but political strike should be banned in the sectors of administrative, transport, communal service and energy fields (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 05. 23).

There are several reasons why political strike ended in failure in the case of North East Estonia. Firstly, there were financial issues for those joining the strike. Sergei Vatmann, a chief lawyer of the law center of the Labour's Union of Estonia, mentioned that most entrepreneurs did not join the strike because of high payments toward the strike committee (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 07. 28). Secondly, there was a negative mood toward the strike in society. Inhabitants of Tallinn and Narva regarded it as a sort of sabotage (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1989. 07. 27). Some local inhabitants were critical, saying that the participants striking in demand of wage increases in the transport sector scheduled on 3rd and 5th August 1989 were only egoistically thinking about their own profits (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1989. 08. 17). Some of the working class also doubted the moral value of the participants of political strike (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1989. 08. 24).

2-7. Pressure from inside the community

In the case of the Gagauz and the Lithuanian Poles, redefined regional minorities such as Bulgarians, Moldovans and Lithuanians became a decisive factor for suppressing political and ethnic mobilization toward regional autonomy (Sato 2007, pp. 124 - 126; Sato 2006, pp. 326 - 327). However such minorities in Transnistria did not form opposition against the Transnistrian authorities. Transnistria consisted of multi-ethnic society included Moldovans and local inhabitants were more aware of class distinction than ethnic. Low pressure from inside is one of the reasons why Transnistria achieved de facto independence.

There was a low percentage of redefined minorities in North East Estonia, most of whom were Estonians. The Estonians criticized the Narva City Soviets, Intermovement and OSTK-n as acting against the principle of constitutional equality of nations. On 18th May 1990 Rein Annik, a vice chairman of Narva City Soviet, and Raivo Murd, Anatoli Paal and Manfred Silland, members of the Soviet, announced in public that the Narva City Soviet ignored the opinion of the Estonians (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 5. 31). Furthermore, they stood firmly against newly formed regional autonomy in Estonia and insisted on the predominance of the Estonian Constitution over the Soviet Constitution in North East Estonia (*Narvskii Rabochii*, 1990. 05. 26). These Estonian Soviet members intended to adopt some kind of containment policy toward other Soviet members of Russian speakers, who were prepared for the united Soviet with Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve Soviets scheduled on 23rd May 1990. However this protest from Estonians was limited in the main cities, because of the

small scale of communities. According to my interview, Chuikin remarked that protests from Estonian members did not always threaten the decision for the united Soviet. However, the low percentage of Russian speakers in villages in North East Estonia affected the difficulty of establishing regional autonomy. In June 1990, the second plenary session of Estonian Popular Front decided to protect the inhabitants who wished to live under the new constitution of the Estonian Republic in Ida-Virumaa (North East Estonia) and suggested a lift of the information blockade (*Leninskoe Znamia*, 1990, 06. 06). This event shows that the political leaders could not always control all areas under the same political goal.

2-8. Pressure from outside

The Soviet authority, including Mikhail Gorbachev, had kept watch on movements of nationalism, radicalism and separatism arising all over the Soviet Union. Therefore there was a possibility that the Soviet authority and the conservative groups who persisted with maintenance of the Soviet structure might utilize the political activities of the republic's non-titular group in order to control the titular groups' political acts (Roeder 1991, p. 222). In the case of Estonia, the political leaders in North East Estonia expected that Moscow might make a patron-client relationship with the Russian speakers, in opposition to Estonian nationalism. In June 1990, in order to control ethnic conflict between the titular and non-titular groups after the matter of Intermovement intrusion into the Estonian parliament, an unofficial meeting of representatives of the Russian speakers was held with Nishanov. These representatives from the Estonian Russians' side were the deputies of the Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR. At the opening of this meeting, Lebedev, a member of Intermovement, and Kogan clarified that the delegations did not belong to the nationalist powers against the Estonian Popular Front, and stressed that they were representatives of the Estonian nation of a particular region (GARF, I. 100). This statement included the intention to neutralize their own political mobilization in order not to confront with the Soviet order. Kogan hoped that the delegation had official status, but Nishanov denied his proposal (GARF, I. 90). While the delegations repeatedly pressed him to define the future institutional design by the New Union Treaty and the political relationship between the Estonian republic and the USSR (GARF, II. 90 - 91), Nishanov became irritated at their behaviour and stressed that Moscow would not give them any official right to negotiate with the Kremlin (GARF, II. 97, 100, 104). Eventually the meeting closed with an agreement to cooperate with the Estonian government for the realization of the IME programme in Estonia, and that the delegation could not achieve any concrete result for the protection of rights of Russian speakers (GARF, II.115 - 116). In order to stabilize the USSR political and socially, Nishanov chose to cooperate with the Estonian government.

The Russian government was also expected to give patronage to their Russian compatriots. However Boris Yeltsin, the most influential figure in the democratic movement in Russia and chairman of the

Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Russian SFSR on 29th May 1990, opposed the idea of regional autonomy in North East Estonia. On 23rd November 1990, after the border issue between Ivangorod and Narva emerged, the delegations from City Soviet members in North East Estonia such as Chuikin, Vladimir Suhov and Aleksandr Makarikov were dispatched to the Russian Federation. The delegations inquired of Yeltsin about his standpoint toward regional autonomy and he responded that North East Estonia was historically located in the Estonian Republic; therefore the Russian Federation would not support any kind of separatism in Estonia (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 11. 29). The matter of the massacre in Vilnius Television Tower in January 1991 consolidated his position. Yeltsin flew to Tallinn to meet Baltic leaders on 13th January 1991 and signed a declaration of negation of any kind of response from the armed forces, and recognized mutual sovereignty of Russia and the Baltic states (Muiznieks 1995, p. 16). Yeltsin supported the Popular Front power in the Baltic states in order to emphasize his different position against conservative powers in the Kremlin and reinforce opposition power against Gorbachev (Herd & Lofgren 2001, p. 280). He chose to support the democratic movement by Estonians and to concentrate on Russia's own domestic affairs rather than interfering in Estonian domestic issues on the basis of being ethnic compatriots.

North East Estonia could not receive support from the two influential figures they expected to, and the political leaders and social organizations of Russian speakers did not have any other choice except negotiation with the Estonian government for the improvement of rights as a minority in Estonia. In this sense, the political actors in Transnistria trusted Moscow's patronage of their political movements less. Moldova is located much further from Moscow influence than the Baltic states from a geopolitical aspect. On 22nd December 1990, Gorbachev stated that Moscow did not support political activities in the Gagauz region and Transnistria (*Sovetskaya Moldova*, 1991. 01. 03). Transnistrian authorities discouraged the statement, while proceeding with policies toward completion of a state structure such as founding a state bank, parliament, presidency, court, police, army, and so forth. This independent attitude became one of the major causes of establishment of a de facto independent state, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

The case of the political mobilization in North East Estonia consisted of a mixture of a conflict between the titular ethnic group and non-titular, and a conflict between center and periphery. It showed tendencies of ethnic conflict at the initial stage of the mobilization, and central-peripheral conflict during the latter phase. Moreover, the conflict zone was widely expanding from Tallinn to North East Estonia. The case of North East Estonia shows clear contrast to the case of Transnistria, which political mobilization thoroughly centered in Tiraspol and left bank of the Nistru River.

North East Estonia and Transnistria had not only large differences in the quantity and quality of their resources, but different periods of arising political events. The political mobilization of North East Estonia began to be active after October 1988, while that of Transnistria gained pace after March 1989. This five months' time-gap gave the Transnistrian authorities time to learn various methods and experiences from the first example of political struggle by a non-titular group in the Baltic states. Transnistrian political actors could assess what kind of political protest against titular nations was effective from the case of North East Estonia. At the same time they learnt that the Soviet authorities took little action against political movements by non-titular nations despite their pro-Moscow attitude. Russian speakers in Transnistria rapidly brought collective actions against Moldova under the idea of "strike while the iron is hot." This time-based superiority brought large rewards for Russian speakers in Transnistria, namely their separation from Moldova.

Another remarkable point is that the political leaders and social organizations in North East Estonia did not have clear political aims like the movement for wider autonomy or independence in Transnistria. Chuikin et al. tried to promote the establishment of regional autonomy but local inhabitants in North East Estonia did not always aspire it. At the same phase, some moderate political leaders did not cut means of communication with Edgar Savisaar, then Prime Minister, and the Estonian government though there was conflict with Tallinn. It is true that the lack of accounted and expected resources and low support from local inhabitants include Russian speakers inevitably convinced the political leaders to abandon forming regional autonomy and to negotiate with the Estonian government. However, we should notice that the will of political leaders promoting mobilization is the most decisive factor. After the recovery of Estonian independence, Russian speakers in North East Estonia desired peaceful resolution and continue working even now for protecting their rights as the regional majority within the legal framework of the Estonian constitution. It should be regarded that such a political decision by the political leaders in North East Estonia did not bring social and political chaos in Estonia, and in fact saved the inhabitants from facing armed conflict.

Appendix. Process of the Political Mobilization by Russian Speakers in Estonia

This Appendix describes political events, which gave great impacts on accelerating and restraining of the political mobilization of Russian speakers in North East Estonia. In the case of Transnistria, you may refer to Charles King's works (2000). The Appendix focuses on the political events in the case of North East Estonia.

In September 1988, Estonians, chiefly members of the Estonian intellectual class, demanded a new scheme for the language law from the Estonian government (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1988. 10. 07).

Narvan citizens, largely Russian working class employed at the Estonian Power Plant and Kreenholm textile mill, were on the watch for an emergence of “Estonian nationalism” and expressed their disapproval of the Estonian being made the solo official language (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1988. 10. 18; 1988. 11. 10). On 25th October 1988, employees of the Power Plant and Kreenholm formed the OSTK-n, and began to act with the aim of representing non-Estonians and the Russian working class in North East Estonia in particular. The OSTK-n generally professed itself to be against the conduct of the project of IME, on the grounds that it did not meet the requirements for the interests of the labour side (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1988. 10. 29).

Besides OSTK-n, Intermovement had taken a leading role in collective action against the language law. This association, as a new name for Interfront, began to act as a countermeasure against the Estonian Popular Front on 19th July 1988 and became more politically active after being renamed as Intermovement in October 1988 (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1988. 10. 12). Members of Intermovement chiefly consisted of political entrepreneurs in Tallinn and cities of North East Estonia and Red Army veterans. While the Estonian Popular Front had gained influence in Tallinn and Tartu, targeting the independence day of the first Estonian Republic on 24th February 1989, Intermovement was gradually developing into a systematized social organization. On 14th March, Intermovement with OSTK-n organized a large-scale meeting in Tallinn, in which 30,000 to 50,000 supporters and free riders participated (Smith 2002a, p. 49). After this event, two major, newly established social organizations had more remarkably taken a core role in stimulating the motives of Russian speakers in Estonia.

The first Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union was held in Moscow from the end of May to the beginning of June 1989. At the first Congress, Evgeni Kogan had taken on the role of a messenger from Intermovement and OSTK-n to Moscow. He demanded that the Congress should form a supervisory commission in order to handle illegal acts and laws in the Estonian political arena against the Soviet constitution. He also claimed at the Congress that the IME, which was thought to be a first step towards secession from the Soviet Union, contained “discriminatory” passages because it planned to raise the salary of employees in educational, medical, sports, and journalism sectors, while decreasing pay in heavy industrial, construction, mining industrial, and military industrial sectors, which most Russian speakers were engaged in (Andersen 1999, p. 102).

In February 1990, with the anniversary of the Independence Day of the first Estonian Republic near at hand, tension between the Estonian Popular Front and Intermovement had heightened. The second round of the twentieth plenary session of the Narva City Soviet was opposed to the general election result of the Congress of Estonia, and demanded a legal investigation and general discussion about justice from Congress in the Supreme Soviet of Estonia, in accordance with the constitution of the Estonian SSR and that of the USSR (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1990. 02. 24). On 15th February 1990, city and regional Soviet members in Tallinn and North East Estonia, cautious of upheaval caused by ethnic mobilization guided by the Estonian Popular Front and the Estonian Congress, gathered at

Tallinn and formed a “committee in order to defend the Soviet government and citizenship in Estonia” (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1990. 02. 24).

The matter of the proclamation (reconfirmation) of Lithuanian independence on 11th March 1990 also posed a serious menace to the society of Russian speakers in Estonia. They had kept watch for similar acts or declarations by the Estonian authority. On 14th March labourers, entrepreneurs of heavy industry and military-industrial complex, and veterans of the Red Army, supported by OSTK-n and Intermovement, assembled at Freedom Square in Tallinn and held a large-scale meeting under the name of “For unification of the Soviet Union and the rights of nations” (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 03. 17). On 13th April 1990 the party convention of the Communist Party, which was called a united session of super regional and city parties, was held in Narva and reconfirmed the constitution of the USSR and Estonian SSR superiority over the reprocessed Estonian republic constitution in North East Estonia (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1990. 04. 19).

One of the most crucial periods concerning conflict between Estonians and Russian speakers was in the middle of 1990 (Interview with Lauristin). On 15th May 1990 social organizations and radical groups decided to picket major governmental buildings by force as an ultimatum against laws concerning the status of the Estonian government and concerning the Estonian state symbol, which were planned to be enacted from 30th May (*Leninskoe Znamia*, 1990. 05. 17). After this violent accident, social associations of the Russian speakers split into two varieties: some were highly discreet and others more radical, but both sides wished to avoid a further violent outcome.

Another peak of conflict was when the “border” between Narva and Ivangorod appeared. On 8th October 1990 Narva City Hall built a control checkpoint to passersby on the friendship bridge (Most Druzhbi) over the Narva River (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 10. 25). The local inhabitants in North East Estonia put out the message in public that the Trans-Narvan region (Estonian side - on the left bank of the Narva River and Russian side - on the right bank) were a single unit (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1990. 10. 25). Responding to their voices, on 11th October six city Soviets in North East Estonia and the west part of Leningrad district, Narva, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve, Ivangorod, Kingisepp and Slantsy organized a united Soviet and demanded a retraction of the economic border, and began to form a research team in order to establish an economic independent zone in the Trans-Narvan region (*Narvsky Rabochii*, 1990. 10. 16).

The final phase of the confrontation between titular nationality and non-titular was at the time of the August Coup. Members of OSTK-n, Intermovement and Soviet split into several factions in their evaluation of the Coup. In the OSTK-n meeting, Ivan Shepelevich opined in favour of the committee for state security of the Soviet Union, while Aleksander Pliusshev insisted that members should not easily support the committee under such conditions in which Gorbachev himself had not tendered his resignation as President of the USSR (*Sovietskaya Estonia*, 1991. 08. 22). In consequence of the collapse of the Coup, independence of the Baltic states had become decisive and the issue of Russian

speakers turned into a domestic one in the now independent Estonia. The political mobilization of Russian speakers in North East Estonia, which requested encouraging supporters from outside, eventually closed with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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