

THE MOVEMENT TO ESTONIANIZE SURNAMES IN INTERWAR ESTONIA

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This article focuses on the movement to Estonianize surnames in interwar Estonia following the establishment of independence. A substantial proportion of Estonians had non-Estonian, mainly German, surnames, dating from the time of the emancipation of the serfs in the early nineteenth century. Finland, where a similar situation prevailed with the widespread presence of Swedish surnames, served as a stimulus and model for the Estonian movement. The initial efforts to promote nationalization of names in the 1920s and early 1930s failed, largely because the process was complicated and expensive. On the other hand, when the Päts regime placed the full force of the state behind the campaign, it quickly found a massive response. The extent to which the success of the movement also signified a more integrated and unified ethnic Estonian community, however, remains debatable.

The movement to Estonianize surnames among ethnic Estonians, which began in earnest with the consolidation of an independent Estonia in 1920 and culminated as a mass campaign in the second half of the 1930s, had its origins under tsarist rule in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The issue arose because many Estonians had historically acquired non-Estonian family names, mainly after serf emancipation in 1816–1819, but also in earlier centuries as some Estonian-speakers moved to the cities and rose on the social ladder. Following some brief historical background, this article will focus on an evaluation of the basis for the name-changing movement and its results in the 1920s and 1930s. What were the origins of the campaign and who took the initiative in leading it? Why did it suddenly become a mass movement in the mid-1930s and how was this related to the onset of the authoritarian regime led by Konstantin Päts? Finally, how did the movement and its results fit into the larger context of an evolving Estonian national identity during the interwar period?

Because of a lack of specific data on this topic, it is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the proportion of Estonians who had obtained family names by the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is known, however, that urban Estonians were acquiring surnames by at least the fourteenth century, and a

minority of Estonian peasants – in some locations as many as 15–20 percent – had them as well.¹ Nevertheless, as was the case in much of Europe, the great majority of the rural population only received last names in the modern era. As a consequence of the emancipation of the serfs, Estonian peasants in the province of Livland acquired surnames in the years 1823–1826, while in Estland province the same procedure took place about a decade later in 1834–1835. In both cases the entire process was controlled by the traditional elites – Baltic German nobles, estate administrators, or clergy. Depending on the local situation the peasantry may have had some choice with regard to last names, but in numerous instances the German authorities simply assigned them as they saw fit.² As a result, although no systematic records of what took place have survived, it is clear that a large proportion of Estonian peasants received German surnames. A mapping of names, published by the linguist Andrus Saareste in 1934, indicated that there were major regional differences in the incidence of German surnames in Estonia with their occurrence considerably more frequent in northern Estonia (the former province of Estland).³ In view of the historically hegemonic status of the German language in the region, it is not surprising that the tendency of some urban Estonians to Germanize their last names continued until the First World War, despite central government attempts to raise the status of Russian through a policy of cultural Russification in the last decades of the tsarist era.⁴

The first signs of awareness that this situation was anomalous appeared among the emerging Estonian intelligentsia during the national awakening era in the 1860s and 1870s, most likely through increasing contacts with Finnish intellectuals. It is noteworthy that some Estonian public figures with German surnames adopted Estonian-language pseudonyms in this period, e.g., Koidula for Lydia Janssen and Linnutaja for Carl Robert Jakobson. Nevertheless, under tsarist-era regulations, officially changing a family name was nearly impossible since it required special permission from the tsar himself.⁵ During the waning years of the Russian empire the Estonian folklorist and future diplomat Oskar Kallas, who had married the Finnish writer Aino Kallas (née Krohn) and spent considerable time in Finland, was among the first to publicly advocate the increased use of Estonian first names, and during World War I and the ensuing Russian Revolution, as the status of the German language came under increasing attack in Russia, he also raised the issue

¹ **Tiik, L.** Perekonnanime panekest Eestimaa talurahvale 1835. aastal. – Keel ja Kirjandus, 1987, 30, 83; **Rajandi, E., Tarand, H.** Meie perekonnanime liigitamisest ja seletamisest. – Keel ja Kirjandus, 1966, 9, 397.

² **Henno, K.** Eesti priinimed. Jaani kihelkond. Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, no place, 2000, 23–29.

³ **Saareste, A.** Eesti liignimedest varemalt, nüüd ja tulevikus. – ERK, 1934, 2, 9/10, 142.

⁴ **Must, A.** Eesti perekonnaloos allikad. Kleio, Tartu, 2000, 57. Estonian children attending any school above the elementary level often had their names Germanized, even in the late tsarist era. See **Elisto, E.** Nimede eestistamisest Eestis. – In: Omariikluse süvendamisel. Ü. S. Raimla koguteos. Eds J. Aul et al. Ü. S. Raimla, Tartu, 1938, 49.

⁵ **Ernits, V.** Nimede muutmine kultuuriloolise nähtusena. – In Eestlasele eesti nimi. E. Bergmann, Tartu, 1921, 24.

of changing family names. However, resolving the future political status of Estonia and other more weighty issues took precedence in these years of upheaval.⁶

The most important external stimulus for the movement to Estonianize surnames came from the experience of neighboring and linguistically related Finland. Beginning in the 1860s, increasing contacts took place between Estonian and Finnish intellectuals, and these ties became especially close by the early twentieth century with the emergence of the Young-Estonia cultural movement.⁷ With its more advanced political system and national movement, Finland served as the key model for Estonian development. In the Finnish case an analogous situation to the Estonian one existed with the prevalence of non-Finnish (overwhelmingly Swedish) surnames, and in the wake of the socially mobilizing impact of the Revolution of 1905 and the preceding confrontation with the Russian central government since the February Manifesto of 1899, a mass movement to Finnicize family names emerged. Beginning with the 100th anniversary of the birth of Johan Vilhelm Snellman, the leading figure in the Finnish national movement in the nineteenth century, in May 1906, approximately 100,000 Finns changed their surnames from Swedish to Finnish during the following nineteen months. After that the direction of the movement was to a large extent taken over by the League for the Promotion of Finnishness (*Suomalaisuuden Liitto*), founded in 1906, and it kept the goal of Finnicization of surnames high on its agenda during the coming decades. Just as the Estonian side would, the League promoted name-changing by publishing collections of thousands of suggested names, and a new wave of Finnicization in 1935–1936 that included another nearly 100,000 surname changes coincided with the mass movement in Estonia.⁸ Estonian intellectuals were also familiar with similar movements in other parts of Eastern and Northern Europe, including Latvia, where the historical conditions were virtually the same as in Estonia, Hungary, and Sweden. The Hungarian case proved to be less germane for Estonia because of the contrastingly hegemonic role played by ethnic Hungarians in that society.⁹

Following the collapse of the tsarist regime, as Estonia consolidated its position through a victorious war of independence against Soviet Russia, these neighboring and recent examples of surname nationalization provided legitimacy for the goal of Estonianization of surnames in a new political entity in which Estonians now

⁶ **Kallas, O.** Sadakakskümmend uut ristinime. – Postimees, 1914, 3–5; **Ernits, V.** Nimede muutmine, 24–25.

⁷ See, for example, **Raun, T. U.** Die Rolle Finnlands für das nationale Erwachen der Esten. – Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 1985, **34**, 568–578; **Karjahärm, T.** Venäjän varjossa. Suomi ja Viro Venäjän naapureina. – In: Virallista politiikka epävirallista kanssakäymistä. Suomen ja Viron suhteiden käännekohtia 1860–1991. Ed. H. Roiko-Jokela. Atena, Jyväskylä, 1997, 31–61.

⁸ **Kemiläinen, J. A.** Suurnimenmuutto 10 vuotta sitten. – Suomalainen Suomi, 1916, **1**, 58; **Tarasti, K.** Suomalaisuuden Liitto 1906–1966. WSOY, Porvoo, 1966, 8, 24, 44–45, 61, 77, 80.

⁹ **Ernits, V.** Nimede muutmine, 21–22; **Karady, V.** Symbolic nation-building in a multi-ethnic society – the case of surname nationalization in Hungary. – Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte, 2002, **30**, 81–103; **Suits, G.** Nimede muutmine Rootsisis. – In: Eestlasele eesti nimi, 28–29.

formed the titular nationality. Not surprisingly, the Estonian intelligentsia, especially linguists (who were no doubt most aware of the parallel situation in Finland), took the lead in advocating a similar campaign in Estonia. Among linguists, Villem Ernits (1891–1982), Andrus Saareste (1891–1964; until 1921, Saaberik), and Julius Mägiste (1900–1978; until 1922, Mälson) stood out as activist proponents of the nationalization of both last and first names. By demonstratively Estonianizing their surnames at the beginning of the 1920s, Saareste and Mägiste sought to set an example for their fellow citizens. Institutionally, in 1921, the Estonian Literary Society (*Eesti Kirjanduse Selts*, established 1907), and the Academic Mother Tongue Society (*Akadeemiline Emakeele Selts*, founded at Tartu University in 1920) agreed to promote and coordinate the movement through a joint committee, but a few years later in 1925, the Academic Mother Tongue Society assumed sole responsibility for the operation.¹⁰ The connection to Finland was strongly enhanced by the active role played by the Finnish linguist Lauri Kettunen, Professor of Balto-Finnic Languages at Tartu University in the years 1919–1925, who had direct experience with the Finnish case of surname nationalization.¹¹ Among the most enthusiastic supporters of the campaign to nationalize names were members of the student body of Tartu University, the sole institution of higher education in Estonia throughout most of the interwar period. Representatives of various student organizations, including fraternities, sororities, and societies, established their own committee to promote the changing of surnames.¹²

What arguments were used to encourage ethnic Estonians to nationalize their surnames in the early years of the independence era? Perhaps most importantly, it was noted that to the outside world the extensive presence of German and Russian names among Estonia's key political and cultural figures tended to give the impression that the country was under continuing German or Russian domination and that native Estonians were thus hardly capable of assuming a leadership role in their own society. Furthermore, surnames were increasingly viewed as markers of identity. It was argued that as members of the titular nationality in independent Estonia, all nationally conscious Estonians should naturally want to have Estonian surnames. To those who appealed to the duty to maintain a family's traditional name, it was pointed out that this "tradition" was typically less than a hundred years old and it had often been imposed by non-Estonian overlords.¹³ Following the Finnish example, the Academic Mother Tongue Society moved quickly to put out separate publications and notices in the press advocating the nationalization of names, including a collection of "15,000 new surnames" from which those

¹⁰ **Henno, K.** Emakeele Selts nimede eestistamise käivitajana. – Keel ja Kirjandus, 2001, 44, 2, 74–76; Eestlasele Eesti [sic] nimi! – Postimees, 23.3.1921.

¹¹ **Elisto, E.** Nimede eestistamisest, 50.

¹² **Tiitsmaa, A.** Nimede eestistamisest. – Postimees, 30.3.1925; **J. Meie** üliõpilaskonna valmisolekust rahvusliku lõõgijõuna. – Üliõpilasleht, 22.6.1936; Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, Eesti Kultuuri-loomine Arhiiv (KM EKLA), 233-10-13, 8, 13.

¹³ **Ernits, V.** Nimede muutmise, 23; Eestlasele eesti nimi, 5; **Akadeemilise Emakeele Seltsi Nimede-eestistamise Talitus.** Olgem kõigiti omapärsed, olgem eestlased! Postimees, Tartu, 1927, 2.

with non-Estonian names could choose an Estonian alternative. It also opened an office in the center of Tartu to provide advice and guidance to those who wanted to undertake the name-changing process.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the results of these limited efforts over the next fifteen years were meager. In the years 1920–1934, a total of 2,672 individuals in Estonia changed their surnames, and of this number, only 820, i.e., less than one-third, used the opportunity to Estonianize their family names from a German, Russian, or other form.¹⁵ Why did this initiative fail to find much of a response among the ethnic Estonian population? First, the procedure to change a name was complicated and relatively expensive, involving submission of a petition to an institution of the central government (at first the Supreme Court, later the Ministry of the Interior). Second, the movement was never able to move beyond its original and limited social base among the intelligentsia, especially the somewhat isolated Tartu University community. Attempts in these early years to connect the movement to the celebration of key national holidays such as Independence Day (February 24) and to involve various youth organizations in the effort also did not gain much resonance.¹⁶ This lack of enthusiasm among the ethnic Estonian population at large suggests that a sense of national identity in the initial years of Estonian independence was not as fully developed as had been the case in neighboring Finland a decade and a half earlier, where the first attempts to nationalize names quickly became a mass movement. Both Estonia and Finland had gone through the learning experiences of revolution and war in the years 1905–1920, but Finland also had a long tradition of political autonomy, dating back well into the nineteenth century, and its stark and enduring confrontation with the Russian state after 1899 certainly had a more powerfully mobilizing impact on its population. In both countries as well the language of the majority population had historically been treated as inferior to that of the traditional elites, i.e., German- and Swedish-speakers, but it seems that the lingering negative impact of such attitudes remained present longer among Estonians than among Finns.¹⁷

In the second half of the 1930s, however, the situation in Estonia was completely transformed. The campaign to Estonianize surnames suddenly became a mass movement, encompassing over 192,000 individuals or nearly 20 percent of the entire ethnic Estonian population in the years 1935–1939, as can be seen in the figures listed below:¹⁸

¹⁴ **Henno, K.** *Emakeele Selts*, 75; 15.000 uut sugunime. Akadeemiline Emakeele Selts, Tartu, 1921; *Eestlasele Eesti nimi!* – *Postimees*, 23.3.1921.

¹⁵ **Jõgi, V.** 15 aastat perekonnanimede muutmist. – *ERK*, 1935, 3, 154–155.

¹⁶ **Elisto, E.** Nimede eestistamisest, 50–51; *Päevaleht*, 6.12.1932.

¹⁷ **Laja, L.** Alaväärtuse tundest võõrnimede säilitajana. – *Üliõpilasleht*, 30.1.1935; **Mägiste, J., Elisto, E.** Eesti nimi. Valik uusi perekonnanimesid. Akadeemiline Eesti Selts, Tartu, 1935, 6.

¹⁸ **Rajasalu, I.** Riiklik Propaganda Talitus ja eesti nimi. – In: *Tundmatu Eesti Vabariik*. Koost J. Ant jt. Jaan Tõnissoni Instituut, Tallinn, 1993, 104; **Elisto, E.** Nimede eestistamisest, 52. An archival source that tallies the number of individuals who Estonianized their surnames for the period January 1, 1935 – January 1, 1940 gives a total of 196,482, which fits well with the published figures cited above. See *Eesti Riigiarhiiv* (ERA), 1068-1-1, 4.

Year	Number of persons changing surnames
1935	34 196
1936	78 164
1937	43 069
1938 (to Dec. 1)	26 037
1939 (to Dec. 1)	10 862
Total	192 328

According to the census of March 1934, 600,517 (60.5 percent) of the ethnic Estonians in the country had Estonian (*eestipärased*) surnames and 392,002 (39.5 percent) did not.¹⁹ Thus, the campaign of the late 1930s reduced this latter number by nearly 50 percent, and consequently, at the start of 1940 about 80 percent of all ethnic Estonians had Estonian family names. As the figures listed above suggest, the Estonianizing movement was most successful in the initial three years when just over 80 percent of the name changes took place.

What accounts for this dramatic turnaround? Most importantly, following Konstantin Päts's coup d'état on March 12, 1934, the Estonian government became directly involved in the campaign and mobilized considerable resources to support it. The Estonian state effectively took over the movement to nationalize surnames and made it part and parcel of a program of symbolic nation-building that included a wide range of similar initiatives such as propagation of the increased ownership and use of the Estonian flag and folk clothes as well as encouraging the Estonianization of place-names where this had not already occurred.²⁰ In September 1934, Deputy Prime Minister Kaarel Eenpalu (1888–1942; until 1935, Karl-August Einbund) announced the founding of a new Office of Information and Propaganda (from 1935, called the State Propaganda Office) whose task would be to deepen the sense of national identity among the Estonian population, including its involvement in the campaign to nationalize surnames. In order to facilitate the changing of names, a League for the Estonianization of Names (*Nimede Eestistamise Liit*) was established with a central bureau and several hundred branch offices around the country, and in 1935, it bought up the entire first printing (5,000 copies) of Julius Mägiste's and Elmar Elisto's updated handbook of suggested names.²¹

The central government also greatly simplified the process so that henceforth it was channeled through institutions of local government, and – crucially – it eliminated the troublesome charges that had previously been levied on petitioners.²² Following the Finnish example, the authorities sought to gain momentum for the movement by connecting the act of name-changing with national holidays such as Independence Day or the new Victory Day (June 23), begun in 1934 to celebrate

¹⁹ Lepp, A. Perekonnanimede statistika. – Eesti Statistika, 1936, 15, 266.

²⁰ Eesti kroonika 1938. Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, Tartu, 1939, 102.

²¹ Valitsuse propagandajahi seletused. – Postimees, 19.9.1934; Eesti kroonika 1935. Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, Tartu, 1936, 113; Mägiste, J., Elisto, E. Eesti nimi, 104.

²² Elisto, E. Nimede eestistamisest, 51; Öunapuu, A. Kas nimi ei riku meest? – ERK, 1935, 3, 16.

the key victory over the Landeswehr at Võnnu (Ger. Wenden, Lat. Cēsis) during the War of Independence in 1919. For symbolic purposes and as an additional means for mobilizing the population, 1935 also conveniently represented the 100th anniversary of the end of the process of acquiring surnames by the Estonian peasantry following emancipation. In May 1935, an official flyer promoting Estonianization spoke of “the need to free ourselves from 100 years of occupation by German surnames” and urged Estonians to acquire a “new name by Victory Day.”²³ Judging by the results, the activism of the League for the Estonianization of Names clearly helped to mobilize public opinion in the initial years of the campaign, and as the rate of name-changing slowed down in the late 1930s, it continued to look for ways to breathe new life into the movement, e.g., by soliciting signatures for a public appeal from 244 leading figures active in 24 professions across the entire social spectrum in order to influence the remaining Estonians with foreign names to nationalize their surnames. The appeal was published in the Estonian press in late February and early March 1939.²⁴

On one level it would be accurate to conclude that the Päts regime coopted or even hijacked the previously intelligentsia-led movement to Estonianize surnames. Päts and his closest collaborators, led especially by the energetic and highly visible Eenpalu, increasingly emphasized the need for the state to play the leading role in coordinating national life and creating the basis for national unity. Indeed, said Päts, without the state’s guiding hand in mobilizing society, the Estonian people would remain a fragmented mass, as demonstrated in the political crisis of the early 1930s.²⁵ Thus, the authoritarian regime simply incorporated the name-changing movement into a larger propaganda campaign on several fronts that aimed at symbolic, state-directed nation-building.²⁶ On the other hand, the linguists who had previously helped to start the process, including Andrus Saareste and Julius Mägiste, were satisfied that the movement was finally achieving significant results and expressed appreciation to the state authorities for promoting it. In this sense, for them, the ends justified the means. Both Saareste and Mägiste also argued that by the mid-1930s the Estonian people demonstrated a higher level of national consciousness than in the earlier years of independence and hence a new readiness to adopt nationalized surnames.²⁷ It is likely that the establishment of compulsory elementary education in the mother tongue from the beginning of the independence era was having a cumulative impact on deepening a sense of national identity, and it is noteworthy that increasing numbers of ethnic Estonians were informally

²³ ERA, 1093-1-219, 26; Eesti kroonika 1935, 113.

²⁴ KM EKLA, 245-47-18, 1–2. See published forms of the appeal, for example, in Sakala, February 27, 1939, 3 and Oma Maa, March 2, 1939, 6.

²⁵ Päts, K. Meie rahvas, meie riik on kindlal alusel. – Eesti Kool, 1938, 4, 1, 1–2.

²⁶ Karjahärm, T., Sirk, V. Vaim ja võim: Eesti haritlaskond 1917–1940. Argo, Tallinn, 2001, 288; Elango, Ö. et al. Eesti maast ja rahvast. Maailmasõjast maailmasõjani. Olion, Tallinn, 1998, 287–289.

²⁷ Saareste, A. Uut, eestilist perekonnanime. Kust ja kuidas leida? – Tähisteid. Eestluse Aastaraamat, 1935, 1, 74; Mägiste, J., Elisto, E. Eesti nimi, 6.

Estonianizing their surnames (i.e., without going through the highly bureaucratic approval process) already during the 1920s.²⁸ By the latter half of the 1930s, both Mägiste and Elisto added a new justification for the nationalization of family names as a defense mechanism for a small-numbered people like the Estonians. Mägiste in particular pointed to the expansionist rhetoric emanating from Germany that could be used to spread a “fairy tale” about the ethnic composition of Estonia based on a superficial look at the prevailing family names.²⁹

To what extent did this state-led movement involve an element of coercion? Did the nearly 200,000 Estonians who nationalized their surnames in the second half of the 1930s do so “voluntarily”? There is no doubt that the centralization of the campaign under the State Propaganda Office³⁰ contributed to a certain level of moral and social pressure on Estonian society that was clearly evident in the numerous flyers that circulated in the late 1930s. The May 1935 flyer, issued by the League for the Estonianization of Names, for example, indicates compulsion and obligation by using the verb “must” in the following instances: “...every Estonian with a foreign name must shake off the foreign mask and become a real Estonian in name as well” and “Every Estonian must publicly acknowledge his desire to belong only to his nation”.³¹ Some supporters of the more aggressive campaign also used threatening rhetoric, e.g., one author who claimed that not Estonianizing one’s surname at the present time “at best displayed apathy toward the fate of one’s people, but at worst treason.”³² On the other hand, Andrus Saareste found the atmosphere in Estonian national life at the beginning of 1935 highly positive and oriented toward consolidating its own strength rather than toward attacking others, and it is noteworthy that Mägiste’s introduction to his updated handbook on names begins with the subtitle “To Estonianize or not?”, suggesting the absence of coercion.³³ Those closest to the seat of power certainly felt the strongest pressure to nationalize their surnames, but the step was not mandatory. About 30 percent of the officials in the Foreign and Justice Ministries still had non-Estonian last names in the late 1930s.³⁴ It should also be stressed that the campaign to Estonianize surnames was not directed at the non-Estonian minorities living in Estonia. Ethnic Germans, Russians, Swedes, Jews, or members of any other nationality remained free to use non-Estonian names.³⁵

²⁸ **Tuglas, F.** Rahvalik ja rahvuslik. – Tänapäev, 1935, 2, 41; **Tiitsmaa, A.** Nimede eestistamisest, 3.

²⁹ **Mägiste, J., Elisto, E.** Eesti nimi, 4, 7; **Elisto, E.** Nimede eestistamisest, 53–54.

³⁰ It is striking that the Päts regime willingly used the term “propaganda” in the name of this office, presumably seeing it in a positive light despite the obvious association with a similar institution in Nazi Germany.

³¹ ERA, 1093-1-219, 26. The two quotations in the original are as follows: “...peab iga wõõra-pärase nimega eestlane raputama maha endast wõõra maski ja muutuma ka nime poolest tõsiseks eestlaseks” and “Iga eestlane peab awalikult tunnustama oma tahet – kuuluda waid oma rahwusse”.

³² **Õunapuu, A.** Kas nimi ei riku meest?, 17.

³³ **Saareste, A.** Uut, eestilist perekonnanime, 73; **Mägiste, J., Elisto, E.** Eesti nimi, 3.

³⁴ **Rajasalu, I.** Riiklik Propaganda Talitus, 105.

³⁵ ERA, 3022-1-304, 2.

Finally, the movement to Estonianize surnames should be viewed in the larger context of Estonian politics in the interwar era. In some ways, during its first fifteen years, the movement's slow evolution reflected the exploratory and fragmented nature of Estonia's initial experiment with liberal democracy. The impasse created by the constitutional crisis of the early 1930s, its impact certainly heightened by the Depression, led to a situation in which the established political parties and most of the intelligentsia acquiesced to the need for temporary authoritarian rule. The Päts regime clearly saw one of its main tasks as nation-building, now directed by the state because – in its view – the Estonian people had proved incapable of completing the process on its own.³⁶ The state felt it had to take the lead in fostering national unity and solidarity through such activities as the celebration of Victory Day in June 1935 for which the League for the Estonianization of Names was called upon to play a key organizational role.³⁷ How successful was this nation-building effort? Did the nearly 200,000 ethnic Estonians who nationalized their surnames in the late 1930s feel a greater sense of solidarity with their co-nationals and their country than was the case fifteen years earlier? We don't know for sure, and the sources to reach an informed conclusion on this question probably do not exist. We do, however, know that key figures in the Estonian intelligentsia did not believe that the Päts regime's nation-building had achieved any significant results. According to Harri Moora and Hans Kruus, the goal of an integrated and united nation (*rahvustervik*) that displayed initiative and activism remained elusive, in large part in their view because the authoritarian regime had overreacted to the crisis of democracy and stifled civil society. The result, Moora argued, was widespread passivity, fragmentation, and alienation. The only remedy was a return to full democracy in which individualism could flourish.³⁸ Ironically, Konstantin Päts constantly stressed the goal of restoring democracy in Estonia.³⁹

To the credit of the Päts regime it should be noted that its nation-building program did not include forced assimilation of ethnic minorities. As noted above, the movement to Estonianize surnames was directed only toward members of the ethnic Estonian population with non-Estonian names. This tolerance can in part be attributed to the overwhelming Estonian presence in the country (88.2 percent in 1934 vs. only 1.5 percent for the traditional historical elite, the Baltic Germans).⁴⁰ Probably more important, however, in discouraging any aggressive approach toward

³⁶ See the editorial in the first issue of *Uus Eesti*, the organ of the Päts regime, September 18, 1935, 4: "The Estonian nation is in the process of being formed and created."

³⁷ II Võidupüha 23. juunil 1935: Kava, põhimõtteid, materjale. Võidupüha Pühitsemist Korraldav Komitee, Tallinn, 1935, 3.

³⁸ **Moora, H.** Demokraatia rahvusliku kandejõuna. – In: *Võim ja vaim*. Koost J. Andre jt. EÜS Veljesto, Tartu, 1940, 1–13; **Kruus, H.** Rahvusterviklusest. – *Akadeemia*, 1940, 4, 3, 143–152.

³⁹ Riigivanema K. Pätsi kõne üleriiklikul koolijuhatajate koosolekul Tallinnas 8. novembril 1936. – *Eesti Kool*, 1936, 2, 9, 464; **Päts, K.** Meie rahvas, 3.

⁴⁰ **Sõrmus, R.** Eestlased ja eesti vähemusrahvused. – In: *Tähiseid: eestluse aastaraamat*, I. Toim E. Roos. Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi, Tartu, 1935, 59.

assimilation of minorities was the lingering impact of the historically low status of Estonian, which rendered its attractiveness questionable for non-Estonians despite the fact that it had in the meantime become the language of the titular nationality in the newly independent state. It is characteristic that the phenomenon of the so-called Juniper Germans (*kadakasaksad*), i.e., partially Germanized Estonians, although declining in importance, was still present in the decade of the 1930s.⁴¹

Similar to the situation of numerous other non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe, the Estonians entered the era of modernization in the second half of the nineteenth century with a substantial legacy of foreign surnames. Not surprisingly, neighboring and linguistically related Finland served as the key stimulus and model for a movement to nationalize non-Estonian names. The establishment of an independent Republic of Estonia afforded the opportunity to realize this aim, but the first efforts to promote the Estonianization of surnames in the interwar years failed to produce any substantial results and remained largely limited to the small educated elite. However, name-changing was transformed into a mass movement in the second half of the 1930s, as the Päts regime mobilized the full force of government institutions behind the effort, viewing the Estonianization campaign as an essential element of state-led nation-building. After a decade and a half of experience in an independent Estonia, including the cumulative impact of compulsory education in the mother tongue, the ethnic Estonian population proved to be considerably more receptive to such an appeal. It is also likely that the growing international storm clouds that appeared on the horizon by the mid-1930s, especially the expansionist rhetoric and actions of the Nazi regime in Germany, helped to convince many Estonians of the need to close ranks as a nation. On the other hand, leading voices among the intelligentsia remained strongly critical of the Päts regime's top-down approach to mobilizing society and suggested that a truly substantive integration of the Estonian nation was only possible in a political and social system in which democratic individualism flourished.

PEREKONNANIMEDE EESTISTAMISE LIIKUMINE MAAILMASÕDADEVAHELISES EESTIS

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Artiklis on keskendutud perekonnanime eestistamise liikumisele Eesti Vabariigis 1920. ja 1930. aastatel. Teatavasti sai valdav osa eesti talupoegadest perekonnanime seoses pärisorjuse lõpetamisega 19. sajandi kolmandal ja neljandal kümnendil, kuid paljudel juhtudel anti saksapärased nimed. Juba ärkamisajal tajusid eesti haritlased sellise olukorra ebanormaalsust, aga nimede muutmise Tsaari-Venemaal osutus peaaegu võimatuks bürokraatlike tõkete tõttu. Järjest tihe-

⁴¹ **Kulmen, H.** Kadaklus iseseisvas Eestis. – In: Tähiseid: eestluse aastaraamat, I. Toim E. Roos. Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi, Tartu, 1935, 68–72.

damate suhete kaudu Soomega 19. sajandi teisel poolel ja 20. sajandi algul sai eesti intelligents kindla eeskuju nimede eestistamiseks. Oli ju Soome olukord, kus ajalooliselt domineerisid rootsipärase nimed, Eesti omaga väga sarnane ja massiline nimede muutmine Soomes algas juba 1906. aastal. Pärast Eesti iseseisvumist oli keeleteadlastel Akadeemilises Emakeele Seltsis, eeskätt Andrus Saarestel ja Julius Mägistel, juhtiv osa esialgses ning veel tagasihoidlikus nimede eestistamise kampaanias. Rõhutati, et iseseisvas riigis peaks iga eestlane kinnitama oma rahvusliku identiteedi eestipärase perekonnanimega, aga esimese viieteistkümne aasta jooksul jäid liikumise tulemused kesisteks. Nimede muutmisprotseduur oli keerukas ja küllaltki kallis ning laiema publiku seas puudus selle vastu lihtsalt huvi.

1930. aastate teisel poolel muutus aga olukord täielikult, kui umbes 200 000 eestlast – st peaaegu 50% koguarvust, kellel oli veel olnud võõrapärane nimi – eestistas oma perekonnanime. Kõige tähtsam tegur selles muutuses oli kahtlemata Konstantin Pätsi juhitud režiimi järjekindel sekkumine asjasse, kusjuures nimede eestistamise liikumine sai Pätsi valitsuse laiaulatusliku rahvusliku ülesehitustöö osaks. Kampaania tsentraliseeriti riigi juhtimisel ja 1935. aastal loodi Nimede Eestistamise Liit keskbürooga Tallinnas ning mitmesaja toimekonnaga üle kogu maa. Kohe lihtsustati nimede muutmisprotseduur ja kaotati sellega kaasnevad maksud. On samuti tõenäoline, et iseseisvuse teise kümnendi lõpupoolel oli rahvusteadvus eestlaste seas näiteks sundusliku alghariduse kumulatiivsel mõjul rohkem süvenenud ja selle tõttu mindi kampaaniaga meelsamini kaasa kui varem. Nimede eestistamise liikumine saavutas näilise edu Pätsi režiimi ajastul, aga selle sügavama tähenduse üle võib vaielda. Valitsuse esindajad rääkisid palju rahvustervikluse ideaali realiseerimisest, kuid kriitilised vaatlejad nagu Hans Kruus ja Harri Moora leidsid, et demokraatia kriisi ei lahendatud ning kodanikuühiskonda ei lastud areneda.