

Yesterday, at a reception for cultural figures in Kadriorg, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented a commemorative stone for the restoration of Estonian independence to Heinz Valk, who coined one of the most famous sentences from the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, "One day, we will win in any case!"

Speaking to those invited to the reception, the Estonian Head of State emphasized that August 20th should be called the Anniversary of the Restoration of Independence, not Re-Independence Day.

"Do we really regard the return of the freedom that was desired for half a century as something impersonally achieved by others? The word "re-independence" says just that. The "restoration of independence" on the other hand is active, and the result of our own purposeful activity. As it actually was," said President Ilves.

According to the Estonian Head of State, people are used to saying that not a single drop of blood was spilled to restore independence in Estonia. "But this is not true. Estonia regained its independence by paying for it with tens of thousands of lives and destroyed destinies," said the Estonian Head of State. "In Estonia alone, the Communist regime claimed thousands of victims, including people killed, imprisoned, deported, forced into exile, and persecuted."

"The example of those who stood up to the evils of totalitarianism and the remembrance of their suffering helped the Estonian people to remain true to themselves and to restore their national independence. Therefore, I think that the victims of Communism deserve a dignified memorial. Not only in the capital of United States, but also in that of Estonia," emphasized the Estonian Head of State.

In his speech, President Ilves stressed that the restoration of Estonian independence could not have taken place without dissidents. "August 20, 1991 could not have taken place without the People's Front and Citizens' Committee or the compromise achieved by the leaders of these two national movements. By voting in favor of this agreement, the members of the Supreme Soviet at that time fulfilled their obligation to the Estonian nation and people. This was self-evident. This step had to be taken. Because the Estonia people demanded it."

According to the Estonian Head of State, the Estonian people that had lived under an occupation regime needed awakening and those who awaken them were not and could not be the people in power in the Estonian SSR. "These were people who carried the ideas of the independence that had been taken from us and maintained the values inherent to us. In written words and in pictures, on the theatrical stage, in music, and at the song festivals," said President Ilves.

"In April 1988, the artistic associations came together and finally spoke directly. They stated, like poet Hando Runnel, that the Soviet Union is a colonial empire. They stated like artist Heinz Valk, that there is no such thing as partial freedom."

"You, Estonia's intelligentsia, were on the forefront, were the awakeners. Thank you for this and hopefully you will have sufficient perseverance to keep the nation's spirit fresh," said President Ilves.

Yesterday, on the Anniversary of the Restoration of Estonian Independence, the Estonian Head of State met with the people of Estonia who attended the open house at the Presidential Palace in Kadriorg, participated in the meeting of the August 20th Club, and participated at the presentation of a collection of speeches by Lennart Meri, entitled Political Testament.

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