

“It was a brave—a truly brave—step that the young people of Võru took 20 years ago,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves on Sunday at the central square in Võru, where the 20th anniversary of the day that the young people of Võru confronted the prohibitions and repressions of the occupation authorities was commemorated.

“The fall of 1987 was not yet the fall of the Singing Revolution, and the brutality of the foreign rule has yet to disappear,” recalled President Ilves, adding that the KGB had not even started to evacuate its archives from Estonia.

“However, the young people of Võru dared to repair the graves of those who fell during the War of Independence, which the occupation authorities had tried to level. And the young people of Võru dared to come and publicly commemorate the heroes of the War of Independence. And many of their mothers and fathers dared to support their activities,” said the Head of State. “Thus October 21, 1987 became a forceful and effective day of demonstration.”

“What can we learn from the nerve demonstrated by the Võru youth of that time?” asked President Ilves.

“Firstly: if people dare to be brave, then an empire will start to disintegrate until it crumbles to pieces. Eventually this will happen anyway.

Secondly: the resistance of every foreign power or domestic dictator will crack when the repressed people finally start to truly wake up.

Thirdly: one must be brave oneself. One must be brave even when this bravery seems to be only senseless bravado to many,” said the Head of State.

“I thank you for that bravery!” President Ilves said addressing those in Võru today who had also been at the Võru Cemetery exactly 20 years ago. “Because you proved that foreign rule is not that strong, that a chain of uniforms of a foreign power could not restrain you. You provided the

hope that freedom was coming.”

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229