

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves participated in the final conference of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity today in the Presidium Hall of the Academy of Sciences.

The Head of State thanked the members and researchers of the International Commission for their work, the results of which have been quoted in many scientific publications.

“I am especially pleased that the Commission’s final report is being presented on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” President Ilves said.

“Thanks to the work of the Commission, the domestic discussions on Estonia’s recent history have also become much more reasoned—baseless mudslinging has receded into the back corners of chat rooms and the political arguments that have fossilized with the decades have not hardened into axioms,” the Head of State said.

According to President Ilves, we cannot say that crimes against humanity have now been 100% investigated and that this page in Estonian history can be turned.

“The need to raise awareness about our recent history has not disappeared,” the Head of State said, recalling his own proposal to establish the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, which would examine the occupation period from the middle of the last century until 1991, and this from the viewpoint of the violations of human rights.

The Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity was convened by Lennart Meri in 1998. The Commission’s objective was to investigate the crimes against humanity committed in Estonia, or against Estonian citizens or residents, starting in 1940. The Commission based its research on the definition of crimes against humanity as determined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. President Lennart Meri invited Minister Max Jakobson from Finland, Uffe-Ellemann-Jensen from Denmark, Arseni Roginski from Russia, Baron Wolfgang von Stetten from Germany, and Paul Goble, Nicholas Lane and Peter Reddaway from the United States to serve as members of the Commission. The Chairman of the Commission was Max Jakobson.

In 2001, the Commission published its first report on crimes against humanity in Estonia during the German occupation. The report that was published three years later dealt with the years of 1940-1941. The report that was completed today deals with the crimes against humanity committed in Estonia starting in 1944. In 2006, the research that was the basis for the two first reports was published as a book entitled Estonia 1940-1945: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity. The research that was the basis for the final report will be published next January.

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