

"Estonia's painful past helps us remember today how important it is to safe guard the values of a free and democratic society. This gives our existence some insurance and security and is the only way for us to maintain and develop the tolerance that we so badly require here, in Estonia," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves today, at the "95-65-25" conference of the Estonian Jewish Community, which was held to recall the anniversaries of the establishment of the Republic of Estonia, the state of Israel and the Jewish Cultural Society here, in Estonia.

"Similar historical experiences with totalitarian regimes and encounters with blind, misanthropic anger have taught us, both Estonian and Jews, that evil should never be given the space to grow. We know first-hand only too well what this will mean and where it can ultimately take us. A free, tolerant, open-minded society will not let all this happen again," emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

He recalled that back in 1936 a reputable London weekly, "The Jewish Chronicle", described Estonia as an "oasis of tolerance", when dark clouds gathering above Europe grew bleaker by the day and anger was officially endorsed in some countries; and while tens of thousands of "wrong" books went up in flames in Berlin in 1933, a faculty of Jewish science was opened in the University of Tartu in 1934.

The communist occupational regime closed down all the organisations of free citizens in 1940, including the organisation of the Estonian Jewish community, and put an end to a cultural autonomy that was granted to ethnic minorities under the Manifest of Independence; then another nightmare followed – the Nazis – whose crimes against humanity will never be forgotten, who will never be forgiven, told President Ilves, saying: "While the Nazi occupation regime almost wiped out Jewish culture in Estonia, its re-emergence was prevented by the communist Soviet regime, which followed the Nazi regime again and lasted for many years."

This happened because the logic of totalitarian regimes does not tolerate the social and liberal thinking of citizens, whether we speak of the impact of Nazism or communism suffered by Estonia; they both attempted to destroy the free spirit and independent activities of citizens and tried to bend everything to serve their alien power, told the Head of State.

In Estonia, the Jews were among the first to restore their social activities, as the alien regime began to weaken, understanding the need to establish a democratic and free society and be a

part of its development.

"Through your third sector efforts and active participation in Estonian life, you have contributed to the birth of our state and restoration of independence, the freedom and persistence of Estonia. You have helped make Estonia bigger, more intellectual and richer," admitted President Ilves.

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