

Fellow citizens of Estonia,

Today marks a very important anniversary: it is seventy years to the day since Estonian history changed forever.

On 14 June 1941, unmitigated violence was brought to bear by a totalitarian regime on the citizens of a subjugated nation in occupied territory. This heinous action by a foreign power, which has been classified as a crime against humanity, was a personal tragedy for thousands of families. It meant death; the separation of parents from their children; the separation of families from their homes. Such was the intent of the foreign power – to tear our nation apart, bringing down its greatest sons and daughters. It was an attempt to destroy Estonia, and to erase all thoughts of statehood and the possibility of independence.

Some of those who survived this attempt to destroy them are still with us today. There are families who managed to return to Estonia and raise new generations here. These people deserve our respect.

Fellow citizens, in placing wreaths and floral tributes on memorials around the country today we remember those lost to us – our compatriots, who became the innocent victims of an iniquitous communist regime.

Yes, the deportations of June 1941 left an indelible mark on Estonian history – the nation bore witness to a crime against humanity of unprecedented proportions as the totalitarian regime showed just how brutal it could be. But try as it might, it could not destroy our dream of an independent, democratic Republic of Estonia. On the contrary: the attempt only made the spirit of our nation more indomitable. In time, right prevailed – and since then, we have grown into a Republic of Estonia which is beautiful, safe and internationally successful. All that we see and feel around us today, 14 June 2011.

Long live Estonia!

Toomas Hendrik Ilves  
Ene Ergma  
Andrus Ansip