

The departure of the writer, humanist and politician Václav Havel marks the departure of a great European.

Václav Havel was a man who stood for freedom, democracy and human rights and was always convinced in the supremacy of tolerance and human respect. He was a brave and vocal advocate of both individuals and entire nations, who could solely defy evil by the power of his word and change the world more than the regimes that resisted him through repression and tanks. This is how Havel demonstrated the power of free words and the eternity of humane values.

He took the immeasurably immense spiritual role as a fighter against totalitarian regimes and authoritarianism in Europe and the world in general. He was also a spokesman for people who had broken free from alien regimes and occupations. Even those who were fearful of him and despised him listened to Václav Havel, the politician.

We will always remember him as one of the most important symbols of Europe in defeating communism and as a person who placed democratic values above agreements that only resulted in short-term benefits. He did this with his creative works during the darkest years of the 20th century and later, as a head of state, through politics. Havel understood that the end of evil starts with the first rays of freedom to penetrate the doors of darkness.

Estonia will remember Václav Havel with gratitude for his support for our return to Europe and integration with NATO; as a pioneer, he was acutely aware of the need of small nations to ensure their security and their future. He patiently explained all of this to those who never wanted to hear or lacked the skills to listen, as well as those who were naive enough to believe that totalitarianism would want to change itself.

On behalf of the Estonia people, I express my condolences to the next of kin of Václav Havel and to the people of the Czech Republic.

Toomas Hendrik Ilves

*The Republic of Estonia awarded Václav Havel with the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana in 1996.*