

Dear Members of the Defense League and Defense Forces,
Dear Latvian brothers-in-arms, all of our allies, friends,
Honorable President Bērziņš,
Dear Estonian people,

Today ninety-five years ago the Estonian forces, together with Latvian units, defeated our common enemy, known as the Landeswehr in the Battle of Võnnu. The Cēsu kaujas.

But let us call the Landeswehr – and the Red Army, our other opponent in our War of Independence –, by their proper names. Among them, there were empire savers, pillagers and terrorists.

If we understand that it is our victory over them that is the essence of Victory Day; if we understand what it was that the Estonians and Latvians fought here on the Southern Front, then we can understand how little the world has changed in 95 years.

Let us not live in illusions. The foundations of the security architecture on which we, along with our allies, relied for 23 years, are gone. We've been constantly soothed by people who insisted that no more territories would be annexed in Europe; no more countries would be militarily attacked.

Yet, it turns out that countries are still attacked, territories are still occupied and annexed. During the last six months, all of the significant treaties that guaranteed the independence of European states have been violated. Raw power, brutal use of force, injustice covered by lies, that is, flagrant propaganda and distortion of facts – everything that the young Estonian Republic fought against five generations ago is still there. Only during the last quarter of a century have we got used to peace and European development, to constitutional protections, justified expectations and improved wellbeing.

What we see in Eastern Ukraine today, we saw in Estonia in 1940 and 1919. We cannot, and often don't even want to imagine how fragile the wellbeing that we've got used to really is; how

fragile is the peace around us, our independence and our freedom. Just like no one could imagine it in the cafés of Tartu or the farms of Valgamaa in 1938.

Now we know how costly this illusory sense of security soon turned out to be.

Therefore, Victory Day, which commemorates the courage of our forefathers and -mothers nearly a century ago, is far more significant than just a prelude to St. John's Eve. It is, first of all, the time for us to stop and think.

Estonia always retained a healthy skepticism, looking at the post-Cold War world order and the perpetual peace in Europe. The past has made us wary.

Therefore, even during economically tough times, we always found the funding for national defense. Therefore, we have participated in NATO missions far from home.

Now we see that these investments were worth it. Now people say at NATO ministerial meetings that everyone should follow Estonia's example.

Because it turns out that we have a revanchist and revisionist neighbour who does not think that the European order, established by the peoples freed 25 years ago, should last. And whose emissaries declare that tolerance is just a sign of decadence and liberal democracy as we understand it is only a peculiarity of Western civilization.

The talk about the empire is back. The propaganda mills are grinding ceaselessly.

But NATO is not asleep either. If 20 years ago NATO's role in Europe was questioned in some quarters, then now the alliance is back in its fundamental business – protecting the territory and the freedom of its allies.

NATO is there in Estonia – in our waters, in our airspace, on the ground.

Some people have expressed doubts: will Estonia be helped if things get serious?

We will, I assure you. In Estonia, NATO is defending itself. Otherwise, no NATO allies could ever feel protected. The principle “one for all, all for one” has created a situation where no country has ever dared to attack a NATO member.

Therefore, Estonia, like every other member of the alliance, can feel strong.
This time everyone knows what the actual situation is.
This time we are ready to resist, if that would be necessary.
This time, together with our allies.

Dear Estonian people.

Estonia has a battle-ready defense force, which can deploy tens of thousands of well-trained men and women if needed.

We have a Defense League with a strong will to defend our country.

This is the answer to those who have questioned the meaning of compulsory military service.
This is also the answer to those who have thought that members of the Defense League are like little boys who like to play war and run around with weapons instead of doing something useful.

And, as I said, we have our allies. We have NATO air force in the newest and most modern airbase in Europe. We have the allied ships in the Baltic Sea. Allied troops are stationed with our troops in Estonian bases, in Estonian NATO bases.

Dear Estonian people,

Victory Day is the day to recognize members of the Defense League and Women's Home Defense – the people who dedicate their free time and their free will to protect the freedom of us all.

The events in Ukraine confirm the necessity of the Defense League. In Ukraine, they did not start to establish, train and equip voluntary defense units until the violence had already reigned for some time.

In Estonia, the Defense League was founded after World War I, when people witnessed the mob rule of the demobilized Tsarist soldiers in Latvia. Our Defense League was established to prevent this happening in Estonia.

It is the free will of the Defense League that deters any potential aggressors. The attitude of the men and women who defend their own homes is totally different from that of little green men, mercenaries or criminals.

Every potential enemy knows that its greatest threat is a nation seriously defending its way of life and its values. We can find examples of this from distant as well as recent past.

Dear Estonian people.

The most important lesson Ukraine can teach Estonia lies in a question that each nation and society must answer every day.

The question is: is our way of life, our freedom worth defending? Is it worth sacrifices?

Only we can answer this question – all of us, regardless of our age or gender, our profession or place of residence, our ethnicity or native tongue.

I am proud of the whole Estonian nation, because the answer has been unanimous from Supilinn to Lasnamäe, from Narva to Valga.

Yes, this is our country, where we make our decisions and our choices.

Estonia must understand that this right to decide for ourselves is constantly being challenged. For some, we are too successful, too independent, too stubborn, too European, too anti-Soviet.

The Estonian people have proven that freedoms – the freedom of speech, opinion and movement – along with the rule of law, independent judiciary and democratic elections, bring progress.

We embody all the things that a neighbour of ours regards as an existential threat to itself. For that neighbouring country, Estonia and Latvia are the countries that embody the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century.

Dear Estonian people.

Now I have a question: Are we ready? Are willing to do even more to defend our freedom?

Are we ready to give up some benefits or pre-election promises? Are we ready to be friendlier and more understanding toward each other? Can we stick together?

Estonia is our country. It's our freedom, our personal liberty, our homes and our families. The defense of Estonia cannot be anyone else's business.

Estonia is our business, it's the business of all of us.

Estonia deserves to be cherished and protected.

Long live Estonia.