

In the 19th century the „country people” were awakened to become Estonians. For this we have to thank Faehlmann, Kreutzwald, Jannsen, Hurt, Jakobson and many others of their kind, who, by their example and action showed our forebears the way to national identity.

About a hundred years later, in the middle of the 20th century night fell upon Estonia, attempting to lull us into forgetting our awakening. Attempting to lull us, Estonians, into becoming Soviets, clearing our minds of everything that we had learned and experienced in the meantime. Attempting to obliterate our independence.

They did not succeed. They had not reckoned with the resolve that you and others sharing your ideals will display. Your motto, *fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*, or „Gentle in manner, resolute in principles”, as you have put it, was alien and incomprehensible to them. They had not reckoned with what was going to be your power.

Even today we do not fully grasp what the dreadful 50 years of occupation did to us. One thing is clear though, had it not been for people like you, and I tend to think, you especially, the Estonians would not have resisted and survived the pressure so well.

I do not know what general term, by analogy to the leaders of the 19th century national awakening, shall be used to describe the role of those men and women who helped the Estonian people through this evil era. Were they torchbearers or keepers of the fire?

I would rather prefer the notion of thread – these people kept intact the thread from the fabric that was the Republic of Estonia, carried it safely through and across the abyss until we restored our independence.

The thread carried by you helped Estonians stand up and go on despite the darkness. We knew that you were leading, and by hanging on to the fine but unbreakable thread we knew we could not go astray.

And when, led by you, we came to our destination, back to Estonia, the Republic of Estonia, we started to make stronger the thread that you had carried all the way. The thread became a twine and then a rope, and then eventually a bridge to the first bastion of our own democratic Republic of Estonia.

You were not alone. There were many others like you to carry the thread. Actually there were thousands who helped us remember and then to restore. Lennart Meri, Gustav Ernesaks, Voldemar Panso, Ain Kaalep, Villem Raam, Juhan Peegel. But for me, personally, you came first, Jaan.

You were born into the happiest generation of the first 20 years of the Republic of Estonia. Or this is how it seemed back then. You received the best education any Estonian could ever have. And then darkness fell.

But you were not afraid of the dark, and went to work with the National Committee. The occupying nazis sent you to prison for that. You were also jailed for the same „crime” of fighting

for independent Estonia – by the nazis' followers, the occupying communists.

After transfer from the prison in Siberia to the larger prison called the Estonian SSR, you carried on this work, showing us how to remain respectable, honest and true to our nation. The „comrades”, as you often ironically called them, wished to obliterate all this.

This irony was etched in my memory when we first met in a small New York apartment near Columbia University in 1974. From then on, until our last encounter at a meeting devoted to the memory of Otto Tief's Government last September, which also turned out to be your last public appearance, you always were for me the solid rock of our nation. *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*. This is what you were for so many.

And suddenly, there is nothing but an aching void left for me and for so many others. We feel that we are on our own now and have to manage without your support and advice, without your moral compass. Well, actually we are not really alone. The important lesson of your life teaches us that Estonians shall always manage, if we value education and thinking, and remain gentle in manner, resolute in principles. It was possible in far more grave circumstances than we can imagine today. This is your heritage to the Estonian nation, which allows us to go on, thanks to you.

Your firm principles made us more resolute. We felt wiser in the light of your reading and intellect.

*In lumine tuo videbamus lumen.* In thy light we shall see light. I thank God for allowing you to share all this with us, Estonians.

May you rest in peace.