

Dear people here on the song festival ground and in your homes all over Estonia!

Look around, we are all here, ALL OF US!

Twenty years ago, the people of Estonia rose up against fear, submission and humiliation. The people's desire for freedom was united into an outcry, a joint song of thousands.

Our spirit was free again. The backs bent under half a century's oppression were pulled straight.

Of our joint song and our joint desire, purposeful action for the cause of our freedom was born. We won, and made Estonia a nation again.

Estonia knows how to win, our people know how to win. Let us be proud of that, just as we are taking pride today in the Olympics gold medal of the best Gerd Kanter of the world. This is magnificent.

This Night Song Festival is called „Märkamisaeg”, time to notice, and we are all asked to ask ourselves a question – when did you last notice that Estonia is a free country?

Just two weeks ago, this question would have been very much to the point. Many of us have come to see everything around us – our nation, our freedom, our inviolable rights – as something quite self-evident.

But now, after ten days of devastating news and horrifying images from Georgia, we are once again quite aware that freedom IS NOT self-evident. Freedom is not just a word or a declaration that can be scoffed at or smirked at.

Freedom – for a nation as well as for people – must be maintained and defended every day. Freedom presumes that we take notice of world events. Freedom presumes that we see ourselves as part of that complicated, changing world.

This means that we must concentrate on essential things, and not be distracted by the trivial.

To preserve our freedom, we must take notice of our fellow travellers. „How are you?” and „Is there something I can do for you?” – let these ordinary and caring questions be heard even more often.

Dear people of Estonia.

Those who say that we owe our freedom to our faith and unity, our intelligence and determination, are not mistaken.

But still, we also owe it to our supporters all around the world. The restoration of Estonia's freedom taught us the importance of friendship, the importance of being able to notice.

Today, exactly forty years ago, on 20 August 1968, Czechoslovakia stood alone when alien tanks entered Prague.

Today, forty years later, we did not let Georgia down, and one day, pressure from the international public is bound to banish the alien tanks from Georgia in any case.

No country ever stands alone, we can say again, with pride. But only if we have the courage to stand by our friends.

Dear people.

We want our nation to last. We can make it last. We are strong when we are together.

We can make it if we avoid mistakes. First, we must always be honest with ourselves. Second, we must never let ourselves be deceived by hollow promises, however beautiful they may sound. And third, we must not assume that the world we inhabit is a carefree and completely safe place.

If we avoid these three mistakes, Estonia need not fear the future or hesitate when taking the next step.

To the contrary: we believe in our future.

We believe in ourselves.

We care for the people who live here.

We love Estonia.

We believe in freedom.

Long live Estonia!