

Ladies and gentlemen.

“We must take care to leave nothing undone, we must take all the steps that are possible in the current situation.”

This was Jüri Uluots’ motto in politics. And should also characterise our activities today.

We live at the time into which we were born, and attend to the affairs of the present. The origins of Jüri Uluots were typical of for an Estonian of his time. His destiny was changed by his hard work and talent, as well as ability to make the right choices among the multitude that were available.

Jüri Uluots’ years at school and university fell to a period when many young Estonian intellectuals made their crucial choices. Uluots’ views were conservative; he was a member of the Agrarian League.

As a member of the Constituent Assembly, he was one of the authors of the Constitution. Later, he was elected to the Riigikogu three times. In 1936, he was elected to the Rahvuskogu, and in 1938 to the Riigivolikogu. He was the Chairman of the latter until his appointment to Prime Minister in October 1939.

By calling, Uluots was a lawyer and a professor of law. Hundreds of students whom he taught and examined – quite a miracle to have accomplished it beside active political life – are part of his life’s work.

After the Hitler-Stalin pact in August 1939, and the military bases agreements that had been forced on the Baltic States, Uluots was appointed Prime Minister. He resigned when the Red Army occupied Estonia, and left the capital. That saved him – on 10 June 1941, the NKGB issued an order for the deportation of him and his family, but he was never caught.

After Estonia had been occupied by the German troops, Jüri Uluots in co-operation with several statesmen and experts of law drew up a memorandum on the status of Estonia. The memorandum was submitted to the German powers. It was a request to restore Estonia’s sovereign statehood.

The request was not granted. The warmongers considered it up to themselves to decide the face of the new Europe. The small countries caught in the machinery could only hope for the validity of the Welles declaration and the Atlantic Charter. Hope that the friendship between Stalin and the West would soon end due to the inherent conflict between democracy and totalitarianism.

In 1944, the Germans suddenly remembered the existence of Uluots. As the last Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia, he was required to support the mobilisation to the German Army.

This was the hardest choice of his life. The advancing Red Army was a threat not only to the *Wehrmacht*

. The Red Army's conquest of Estonia would abolish all hope of the restoration of Estonia's sovereign statehood in the course of the post-war peace negotiations.

In February 1944, the unconditional capitulation of Germany was far from certain. The second front had not been opened yet, and Finland was Germany's ally. On the other hand, supporting the mobilisation meant supporting the adversary of the Western allies. Only the democratic West could guarantee the restoration of Estonia's independence. As it eventually did.

In the radio interview on 7 February, Uluots said: „The mobilisation must be organised now; the relations of Estonia and Germany can be settled later on. We need military strength now. If the Communists conquer our country and people, all will be lost; then it will be impossible for Estonians to mobilise themselves or arrange anything.”

On 20 April 1944, the constitutional Electoral Body gathered underground and appointed Jüri Uluots the bearer of Estonia's legal continuity. On 19 August 1944, he said in his speech broadcast by radio:

“... after the war, order has to be established once again between nations, and once again, legal principles shall prevail. There can be many different concepts of law, but there is still a principle that must dominate if any kind of order is to be established, and that is: each shall have what is his. And we desire nothing more.”

Estonia's continuity was preserved uncompromisingly throughout occupations. It was never transferred to the puppet governments of either the Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany. Without legal continuity, we would have no continuity de facto. We would live in a so-called third state, where the legal order of the Republic of Estonia, with all its manifestations, would have no significance whatsoever. We would live in a de novo country, where 24 February would mean just another date in history books. Even our blue, black and white banner would be arbitrary. Fortunately, this is not the case. Even today, we are living in the country whose “Manifesto to all the peoples of Estonia” was once proclaimed by the Rescue Committee.

In 1941 and in 1944, all steps that were possible at the time were taken for the preservation of the Republic of Estonia. And for this, we have to thank Jüri Uluots and his fellow champions.

Jüri Uluots has come home. Peaceful rest to him, and peace of mind to those closest to him.