

Dear friends,

During previous 20th of Augusts we have commemorated those people who were markedly linked to the story of restoring our independence. Among them are the freedom fighter Lagle Parek, "one-day-we-will-win-in-any-case" Heinz Valk, they who voted for independence in the Estonian Supreme Soviet, the people who defended the TV-tower during the August putsch days, the composers of national songs, the Estonian heritage movement. As a sign of our gratitude, they have all received a piece of the boulder that protected Toompea in 1991.

Today all those people will receive this stone who 22 years ago gave the Estonian people faith and hope. They who were encouragers and uniters, integrators, to use a foreign word, and not plotters. They whose voices reassured those who were afraid and had doubts, telling them that even during the darkest hours Estonia had not been taken. These people worked in Estonian journalism.

So, this year's stone of thanks belongs to the Estonian media from the period when independence was restored. To the press that became free alongside Estonia. To the media whose passion and care for Estonia we so often miss today.

It would be unfair of me to single out people because there were literally tens and tens of them on the radio, in television, in newspapers and news agencies. I shall, however, make one exception. Riina Eentalu, an Estonian Radio journalist, cancelled her holiday in 1991 when the August putsch began and rushed back to Tallinn's radio house that hundreds of people had gathered to protect against a possible attack by the Pskov troopers.

Back then, radio – in a pre-online and pre click media Estonia – was the fastest broadcaster and explainer of things both here and for those who were much further away. Including me. I was listening to Estonian Radio in Germany via telephone as Juhan Kristjan Talve or Jouko Vanhanen held the other end of the receiver to a Russian transistor radio that had been smuggled into Finland.

Riina Eentalu, however, was probably the only woman among radio journalists who refused to leave the building in the face of a possible attack, and her voice was proof for all of us that they had not taken Estonia.

Riina Eentalu, you're welcome. And Erki Berends, you who back then were a good colleague of hers, come help her accept this heavy stone. I hope it will find a worthy place in the newly renovated Estonian Radio building.

I thank the Estonian press of the years when Estonian independence was restored.

Thank you.