



Kalle Laanet on 23 August 2023 in Maarjamäe on the anniversary of the initiative to disclose the MRP

Historians believe that the 4th century war theorist Vegetius was the one who said, or rather wrote: '*Si vis pacem, para bellum!*', which means 'If you want peace, prepare for war!'

The two most notorious criminals of the 20th century, the mass murderers Stalin and Hitler, did not wish for peace when they prepared for war.

Their mentality is exemplified by the non-aggression pact signed between Russia and Germany 84 years ago today. All right, for the sake of accuracy - the pact was concluded between the Soviet Union and Germany. It was not long after the pact was signed that these two countries were each other's worst enemies, trying to kill and destroy as much as possible.

But I will not talk about war today. Today, we are commemorating a very shameful day in European history. The day on which Russia, officially the Soviet Union, and Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and their secret protocols. The day on which they agreed on the division of the so-called spheres of influence: these nations and countries for you, these for me...

Hypocritical in each of its clauses, cunning and malicious in both content and form. The conclusion of peace to unleash war and destruction.

Preparing for war in the name of peace seemed like a relic at the beginning of the 21st century, a remnant from dark times past, carried in memories, history books and films.

Over the past few weeks as I prepared for this day of remembrance, naturally, my thoughts revolved around the war waged in Ukraine by Putin's Russia. However, a week ago, today's celebration took on a new meaning.

We heard news about a message from a NATO official that Ukraine could join NATO if it ceded part of its territory to Russia, the aggressor.

Having previously served my country as minister of defence and thus represented Estonia at various NATO meetings, I dare say out loud that NATO is not in the business of repeating the crimes of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Estonia, earnest NATO members and our trusted allies do not divide spheres of influence in Europe.

It was a lapse of judgement made by a young and clearly inexperienced official. Or rather, I hope that it was, and that the young official was not expressing their personal view. I also hope that no Russian agent has accessed the NATO headquarters.

This mindset, however - no matter how erroneous and misleading - confirms that we have to remember the crime of Molotov-Ribbentrop again and again, and explain its nature and consequences.

We do not want to spoil the mood or future of younger people. On the contrary. It is precisely for the sake of future generations' peace and life that we have to explain the consequences of such a mindset.

However, as I steadfastly defend the morality of NATO and our security allies, I have to remind you that there are no friends or enemies in politics, there are only interests.

Over the last decades, values have become the essence of interests. We are allies on the basis of common values and for these values we often sacrifice our less significant interests.

These values are freedom, freedom and freedom! Everything else is based on it and stems from it. Freedom of the individual, freedom of the nation. Freedom and inviolability of man and state. In our small but tough Estonia, we know it very well.

There is no point in splitting hairs in search of the one and only source of Estonia's regained independence and our current freedom. Fortunately, there were more of them. If I had to name a few - the Letter of 40, the Plenum of Creative Unions, the Singing Revolution, the Phosphorite War, the Kodulinn (Home Town) movement and even the Tallinn Old Town Days. In addition, the personal efforts and sacrifices of thousands of people.

The reward, of course, is victory and freedom!

Everything we did in the bloodless opportunities to free ourselves from occupation resulted in a powerful tide that broke down the crumbling walls on the road to the liberation of our country and of others.

I know it sounds proud, too passionate for our culture and language, but I recall the feelings that we had back then, when 36 years ago today, people gathered in Hirvepark to demand, loudly and openly, that the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its secret protocols be published and its consequences eliminated. It was the first public demonstration against the occupation and annexation of Soviet Russia, and its target was chosen well in the context of the time.

Nowadays, nobody is surprised to see a meme that places an equals sign between the hammer and sickle, the symbol of the occupying power of the Soviet Union, and the swastika, of the national socialist Germany. Seeing such posters at the meeting in Hirvepark provoked different feelings in people. The years of terror forced people to look over their shoulder and for at least a moment, to think about potential consequences. However, the main feelings of the day can be expressed with: Finally!

Can it be?

Well now!

As soon as a year later we were singing patriotic songs that had spread throughout Estonia at lightning speed, and the blue, black and white flag soon fluttered everywhere. However, true independence and freedom still took years. Especially when we consider true freedom to be the departure of the Russian army years after the de facto restoration of our country in 1991.

Occupation, annexation...

Without delving into the meaning of these international words that are unfortunately still often used due to the circumstances, I would like to say once again that as we celebrate the initiation that took place in Hirvepark, Tallinn, to demand the disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the secret protocols and the elimination of the consequences, it is not only a celebration of an important victory of our country and people, Estonians, but also an obligation to the generations of tomorrow around the world - such agreements which destroy people, nations, freedom and lives must never happen again.

Long live Estonia!

Long live freedom!

Слава Україні!