

Baltic States opened Western Europe's eyes on Soviet Union totalitarianism -- EP chairman in Vilnius

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VILNIUS, Apr 28, BNS - The European Union (EU) should be thankful to the three Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia for their efforts to better inform Western Europe on the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, said European Parliament Chairman Hans Gert Poettering. Poettering had always sought to utilize his political influence in the spiritual battle against any forms of totalitarianism, he told BNS on Tuesday while on a visit to Lithuania.

"We thank our new colleagues from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia that they have given the Western part of Europe the knowledge about the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union," Poettering said.

The EP chairman expressed gratitude towards MEPs from the Baltic States, as they contributed ample efforts to the resolution to condemn totalitarianism signed just this month.

"On the 2nd of April, and I am proud of that, the EP passed the resolution condemning totalitarianism. And we thank our colleagues from the former communist countries, especially from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, that they supported strongly this resolution. And we can only go into our common future as Europeans if we understand our history and the lessons of our history," the EP chairman spoke.

Poettering stressed assessment of Nazi and Soviet crimes on the EU level to be an issue of personal importance to him.

"We should never forget the totalitarianism of the national socialism which developed in my country, unfortunately. I did not experience it because I was born in September 1945. But my father died at the end of the war as a normal soldier - we think March-April of 1945 - so I never saw him. But this is a very personal thing," said the EP chairman.

The European Parliament leader also brought up studies conducted by a renowned political scientist of German-Jewish descent Hanna Arendt, where she concluded that Soviet and Nazi regimes can be comparable.

"There was a great political scientist, the Jewish political scientist born in Germany Hannah Arendt. She left Germany in the 1930's and she got exiled to the USA. This great Jewish political scientist developed on the scientific basis criteria to describe totalitarianism and she described the communist totalitarianism and the totalitarianism of national socialism saying both totalitarian systems are comparable and terrible," said Poettering.

The European Parliament on April 2 passed a resolution, therein saying it "condemns strongly and unequivocally all crimes against humanity and the massive human rights violations committed by all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes."

"Europe will not be united unless it is able to form a common view of its history, recognizes Nazism, Stalinism and fascist and Communist regimes as a common legacy and brings about an honest and thorough debate on their crimes in the past century," the resolution in question reads.

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