

Here are excerpts from our [interview](#) with Urmas Reinsalu on 5 January about the future of Maarjamäe, the Soviet memorial in Tallinn:

*Interviewer: I am here with the minister of justice, Urmas Reinsalu. What should be done about the dilapidated and possibly dangerous eyesore that is the Maarjamäe communist monument?*

Reinsalu: Clearly, the central object in this location will be the Memorial to Victims of Communism, central both in meaning and architectural implementation. But there will definitely be a lot of people walking around the memorial grounds. Obviously, the surrounding environment should be kept in order, and furthermore, it is elementary that it should not be dangerous, I mean, in the sense of collapsing. Actually, the Ministry of Justice procured a price estimate for the renovation costs, for preservation, so that it wouldn't collapse or fall on people. The estimate came to less than a million euro. Way back when, we made a proposal to the government, in 2016, to come up with a plan in which the state would take over the entire [Maarjamäe] complex ... Back then, the previous government unfortunately did not support my point of view. And the proposal did not find any means of additional funding ... And since next year's budget negotiation will take place in the coming months, the plan is to come up with a new proposal, about taking the entire complex under state command, and providing the minimal sustainable management of the complex as a whole. Also, ensuring that the context is correctly set in the so-called Soviet obelisk, and around it, by putting up informative pointers, stating what those things were meant to be back in the day, as well as directing the guests towards the Memorial to Victims of Communism.

*Interviewer: What about those Soviet objects like the obelisk and the hands, which experts have deemed culturally and historically valuable. Demolishing them or taking them somewhere else would not be a good solution, in your opinion?*

Reinsalu: I don't have any emotion regarding their value, and as far as I know, these objects have not been included in the National Registry of Cultural Monuments. In my opinion, the important part is that they should not be dangerous, like falling on someone's head, or falling over the edge, considering how those skaters are frolicking there. It is elementary. Secondly, when they are at close quarters to the Memorial to Victims of Communism, the most important thing, in my opinion, is that they have respective information boards in different languages that explain what the foreign invaders or occupiers made the objects for. And we have to handle this historical phenomenon as such. Either to demolish them somehow, or preserve them—I lack any kind of emotion here. They are not sacred to me in any way.

*Interviewer: If the Soviet-era Maarjamäe site were to be preserved and restored, aren't you concerned that some politicians or political groups might start using this as a stage for propaganda events, fueled by Soviet nostalgia, aimed towards, and resonating mostly with certain electoral groups from Lasnamäe?*

Reinsalu: I have never talked about renovating or revamping the site for it to be a place to commemorate the Ice Cruise of the Baltic Fleet. The issue is that the site should not be dangerous to people. Would something need to be demolished or fixed so that they don't fall on people? This is a separate issue, which should be resolved

technically, and as economically as possible. But my position is that respective information boards need to be placed there, reminding everyone that this is a historical memorial site founded by an occupying power, that we should not be afraid of it, and that there is the Memorial to Victims of Communism right next to this.

*Interviewer: According to Riigi Kinnisvara and the director of the Estonian History Museum, there have been no substantial discussions regarding the Soviet-era memorial site so far. When will the state give find some kind of funding, and when will the surrounding and relevant facilities come up with a plan for this area?*

Reinsalu: I think it would be sensible to find some common understanding before the budget negotiations, which take place this spring. Then we could make some decisions. But the important thing is that, if they do come to an understanding that some of the Soviet elements on this property should be legally removed, they could take it under consideration. If, say, the architecture experts would also find this feasible, I would also not exclude this as one of the ways of making the area safer.