

Toomas Hendrik Ilves

You were born, on 26 December 1953, in Stockholm, Sweden. Your parents, Endel and Irene Ilves, were natives of the Republic of Estonia who had fled their home country during World War II. (Three of your grandparents were ethnic Estonians. One, the mother of your mother Irene, was an ethnic Russian who had grown up in St. Petersburg.)

You spent most of your childhood in Leonia, New Jersey. After graduating from high school, you studied psychology at the Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1983, you joined the staff of Radio Free Europe, where you produced broadcasts in the Estonian language.

During the ten years that you worked for Radio Free Europe, the biggest story that you covered was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of the Republic of Estonia. (These two events took place in 1991.)

In 1993, you became the ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the United States of America. In 1996, you moved to Estonia and became involved in politics there.

Between 1996 and 2002, when your party (the Moderates) was in power, you served in the cabinet, first as minister of foreign affairs and then as prime minister.

Between 2002 and 2006, when your party was out of power, you served as a member of the European Parliament. You used this largely ceremonial position to rebuild your party and make connections within the European Union.

In October of 2006, you were elected to a five-year term as president of the Republic of Estonia. As such, you are expected to remain aloof from day-to-day politics. (That is the job of the prime minister.) Instead, your chief task is to represent the country as a whole to the outside world and to promote stability within the political system.