

Address of the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, to the nation on Independence Restoration Day

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My fellow Latvians,

There are historic moments in nation's course of destiny when all essential and existential choices converge. Moments when decisions and steps that shape the long-term future of a nation are taken. Moments when the fate of a nation, language and culture is decided.

For Latvia this moment came 102 years ago when 38 members of the People's Council proclaimed Latvia's independence amidst the devastation of war and German occupation of Riga.

There was neither time nor any possibility to hold a referendum or wide public debate. There was only the unshakable conviction of these men that Latvians need their own state, that we have the inalienable right to do as the other nations have done. Conviction that the future of the Latvian nation depends on whether it has its own state.

A similar moment came on 4 May 30 years ago when 138 members of the Supreme Council voted for the restoration of Latvia's independence. For the continuity of the Latvian state established in 1918, for freedom to choose our own destiny and not worry about the continuity of Latvian nation, language and culture. 50 years of occupation had failed to stamp out our national aspirations.

The decisive vote of members of the Supreme Council on 4 May reflected the unwavering will of the people. To mark the 30th Anniversary of the restoration of Latvia's independence, I would first like to thank all those hundreds of thousands of people who put their everyday life on hold to fight for restoration of Latvia's independence 30 years ago with all their heart and courage.

Two hundred, three hundred and five hundred thousand people from all regions of Latvia responded to the call of the Popular Front and joined masses of demonstrators on Daugava riverfront and in the Baltic Way to demand freedom and independence for Latvia.

Thank you all. Thank you to all 250,000 members of the Popular Front, its leadership and local branches. Thank you to national independence movement and all national organisations. Thank you to everyone who took part in these demonstrations and the Baltic Way. Thank you to everyone who made the 4 May vote possible.

Thirty years ago, people of Latvia together with Estonians and Lithuanians changed Europe and changed the history of the world. Baltic Way was the beginning of the process that led to fall of the Berlin Wall and reunited Europe. Baltic countries broke away from the Soviet Empire, shattering its core and inspiring other nations. We should be more about it.

Our bumpy freedom road began 30 years ago. History of our nation clearly shows that if we work together, we can overcome any obstacle and find the best way out of any crisis. I would like to urge everyone to take active part in Latvia's recovery and growth, thus bringing us closer to the perfect image of Latvia we dreamt of 30 years ago.

Congratulations to everyone on the Independence Restoration Day and never forget about all the immense strength and patience inherent in our nation, its wisdom and perseverance, and our ability to consolidate around bigger ideas when decisive moment comes.

May Latvia live forever!



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