

Address by President of Latvia Egils Levits at the opening of the Complex of the Museum of Occupation of Latvia

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[Egils Levits](#)



Dear audience,

I

Our life is unimaginable without the presence of history. It creates and shapes our actions today.

II

Therefore, history serves as one of the roots of legitimacy of any state. Any democratic and legitimate state must be aware of its own history. In modern-day Latvia, unfortunately, history has long laid outside the scope of political priorities. However, a lot has been achieved thanks to the enthusiasm, Latvian national stance and civic patriotism of some individuals.

The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia has, from the very beginning, operated in adapted premises, and the existence of the museum was, for the longest time, ensured by donations made by Latvians in exile, for which we are and will always be immensely grateful.

III

This situation has changed, and today we have gathered for the long-awaited opening of the Complex of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia — the former building of the Latvian Red Riflemen's Museum has been reconstructed and the "House of the Future" designed by Latvian-in-exile architect Gunārs Birkerts has been newly constructed.

Together these two parts now form one whole incorporating heritage, continuity and today's view of the future.

IV

The Museum and therefore also the story of the history of the occupation of Latvia, including four years of Nazi occupation, followed by 46 years of Soviet occupation, will henceforth be housed in a modern building in the very heart of Old Riga.

This site is easy to find and access, it is impossible to pass it by. Its very existence will keep alive the questions we have to ask about the occupation of Latvia, educate society, refute myths and falsehoods, strengthen the historical memory of the Latvian nation.

V

By placing a special emphasis on this period of Latvia's history, we are continuing to restore historical justice.

The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia serves the national resolve enshrined in the Satversme — to remember our victims of foreign powers, to condemn crimes perpetrated by Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes and to honour our freedom fighters.

An improved and reinforced Museum of the Occupation of Latvia is a national level testimony to the fact that the history of Latvia in the 20th century is of genuine importance for us. It allows us to understand Latvia in the 21st century. Thus we are repaying part of our debt to the generations that carried the tragedy and weight of the occupation upon their shoulders, all the while keeping alive the idea of Latvia and the desire of the Latvian nation for a state of its own.

VI

Over time, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia has become an irreplaceable and active collector, keeper and teller of the stories evidencing the history of Latvia. The role of the Museum in explaining history will only increase, because three decades after the collapse of the Soviet regime, we are again encountering purposeful falsification of history, a romanticising of the occupation era and dissemination of falsities. The new home of the Museum will help it fulfil its nationally important duty.

VII

Dear participants,

The Occupation Museum Association of Latvia, the staff of the Museum and its managers throughout the years deserve praise and recognition. Not only for ensuring the daily operation of the Museum, but especially for the perseverance with which they have overcome obstacles and challenges in implementing the project of renovating the Museum building.

In a way, the Complex of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia can be viewed to symbolise a joint project envisioned and finally completed by two parts of Latvia — the one violently exiled together with the one that remained in Latvia.

Let this serve for remembrance and strengthening of the historical memory of Latvia both today and tomorrow!

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-opening-complex-museum-occupation-latvia>