

President of Latvia: freedom and independence must be protected and safeguarded every single day

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On 17 March, the National Resistance Movement Remembrance Day, President Edgars Rinkēvičs attended the memorial event dedicated to the national partisans at the Īle bunker.

In his address, the President of Latvia said:

On this day, for the past few years, we celebrate the National Resistance Movement Remembrance Day. 80 years ago, the Latvian Central Council adopted a memorandum calling for the restoration of Latvia's *de facto* sovereignty, Latvian government, and independence of our country even amidst the German occupation. Five years later, here in Īle, Latvian and Lithuanian national partisans fought a fierce battle against the Soviet occupiers, against the *Chekists*, proving that the spark of freedom remained alive.

Today, we pay tribute to their sacrifice and express our gratitude to all those who fought to preserve the memory of our country's independence during the long years of Soviet occupation, and ultimately succeeded to restoring it.

Today, however, marks a special day because we know very well that the world is growing increasingly turbulent and volatile. Our Ukrainian friends are currently fighting for their freedom, similarly to how the national partisans and Baltic people struggled for their freedom. Freedom must never be taken for granted – it must be fought for and protected every single day. I am absolutely convinced that today, with so many people from different generations present here, we will succeed in safeguarding our independence and security. But we must be prepared to do so – we must be constantly ready.

Let this place and the memory of those who fought and overcome fear serve as a reminder that freedom and independence must be defended every day. May this place give us strength!



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