

Latvia 100 

THE BALTIC WAY 30

THE BALTIC WAY. CONTINUED





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The Baltic Way. Continued

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The international conference “The Baltic Way. Continued” was organised to commemorate 30 years since 23 August 1989 when the campaign “Baltic Way” was organised. It involved approximately 2 million Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians who joined hands peacefully asking to restore the independence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and demanding to recognise the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, concluded on 23 August 1939, and its secret protocols null and void. The human chain started in Estonia, near the Toompea Castle in Tallinn, and went through Latvia and Riga to Gediminas’ Tower in the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius. The campaign “Baltic Way” and the demolition of the Berlin Wall were significant landmarks of contemporary history which contributed to the fall of the USSR. The most significant documentary evidence of this campaign has been included in the Memory of the World Register of UNESCO since 2009.

The goal of the conference was to remind of the significance of the campaign “Baltic Way” in the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States and eliminating the consequences of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

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The Baltic Way. Continued



OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE



Andris Vilks,

Director of the National Library of Latvia

Your Excellency Mr President, Dear Mr Rinkēvičs, Mr Puntulis, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am delighted that this significant event is held in the home of the National Library of Latvia. A building that is called the Castle of Light. I am thankful for the opportunity to address you not just as a Director of the National Library of Latvia, but also as the Head of the Information Society Council of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO that is engaged in the UNESCO Programme “Memory of the World.”

In this position, I have been honoured to lead preparation of the joint application of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to include the Baltic Way in the international Memory of the World Register. And I am happy that I myself also had a chance to participate at the Baltic Way 30 years ago. I was one part of the two million people chain uniting these three countries and nations in Riga, on Brīvības Street, exactly opposite the building of the Committee for State Security of the Latvian SSR.

The joint application of the Baltic States was a success at the meeting of international experts that took place in 2009 in the far-away Barbados. Baltic documents were included in the Memory of the World Register of UNESCO.

The applications are assessed by experts not only from Europe, but also from other regions, including Caribbean, South America, Pacific Ocean region, Far East, Arabic countries and Africa. To be honest, they were not touched as much by the consequences of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact as they were truly amazed and surprised by the resolution and ability to connect in a chain of hands to peacefully ask to admit the truth about



the past of their country, freedom of speech and independent circulation of information.

This year, commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way is organised in a particularly large scale. Events will be held several days in Riga and regions of Latvia.

All three Baltic States are celebrating. The Baltic Way along with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 and its tragic consequences is commemorated in many places.

However, the most attention is paid to the campaign organised in 1989. It includes exhibitions, films, celebratory events, and concerts.

People have been especially responsive to the campaign organised by the Television of Latvia and the National History Museum of Latvia where people were asked to upload their photographs from the Baltic Way at the website “Album of the Century.”

Two days ago, the Vice President of India visited the National Library of Latvia. He presented us a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi symbolises the spiritual strength of a person. The Baltic Way showed that nations are able to join in a non-violent resistance campaign, standing against the power that forces its goals and interests.

The Baltic Way, in fact, initiated the period when countries in the Central and Eastern Europe, one after another experienced non-violent, democratic revolutions, and the physical symbol of the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall, was torn down.

The libraries of UNESCO around the world stand for universal human rights and information, its availability, retaining and storage and repeated use.

It is the matter of free access to information and freedom of expression. Nowadays, credibility and reliability is a topical issue.



Society, together with media, educational establishments and libraries, is looking for ways to fight fake news, to reduce the impact of fragmented information space on the so called period of post-truth.

In democratic countries, censorship is forbidden, however, we still face reminders from the past, self-censorship, economic impact levers and other mechanisms that by change pose obstacles to some parts of the society to access information.

The international conference “The Baltic Way. Continued” is organised not only to remind of the significance of the Baltic Way in restoration of independence and elimination of consequences of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, it also invites you to focus on developments of today and challenges of tomorrow. It is significant to note that during the conference, we will also view the contemporary digital age when traditional understanding of liberalism and democracy and other values face the new discourses.

I wish every participant of the conference, during quality discussions, gain valuable conclusions and ideas for future action. Thank you!



Egils Levits,
President of Latvia

Dear Organisers and Participants of the Baltic Way, Dear Participants of the Conference, Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I warmly congratulate all of us on our common celebration to mark the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way. Today, we have a genuine reason to celebrate and gather here to share memories, judgements, and reflections. At that time, the Baltic Way was a political innovation that had not yet been attempted, and it has led to the fact that we are gathered here today at a conference in a free and independent Latvia. The Baltic Way was a testimony of our shared destiny with Estonia and Lithuania. The Baltic Way was a manifestation of the will of the state of all three Baltic nations. We, the Balts, had a clear goal of restoring national independence and historical justice,

freedom and a better life for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. We had an unwavering will to achieve this goal, and we did it.

After the Baltic Way, the world came to know us again as courageous and confidence-strong Europeans, who began to crumb the Iron Curtain that had separated all of us from a democratic and united Europe.

The Baltic Way was our way back to Europe reminding of the duty to restore historical justice and calling to build Europe as our common home. A belief in the rule of law and justice in international relations inspired the Baltic Way by rejecting power-based order and immoral agreements of superpowers at the expense of small countries. The Baltic Way is our duty and responsibility to stand up whenever and wherever for the values that we shared thirty years ago when joining our hands in an indestructible handshake. The Baltic Way was the beginning



of the end of the Soviet totalitarian regime. It was the last major confrontation between the regime that had existed before and the aspirations for freedom, which represented the aspirations for democracy among the Baltic nations.

Soon after the Baltic Way, an attempt to strangle or eliminate this movement followed, but the Soviet totalitarian regime was no longer so strong. As soon as it showed its weakness, one can say that the Baltic Way already marked the collapse of the Soviet Union, which proceeded soon. The Baltic Way thus marked not only the collapse of the Soviet Union or the totalitarian regime but also the victorious march of the European freedom and democracy that began shortly after that, including the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today we face other new challenges for democracy, but we are still a democracy capable of developing and defending itself in the new situation.

We believed in the international law-based world order and a united Europe as the common home of all democratic nations then, we believe now, and we shall believe as long as the Republic of Latvia and a free Europe exist. We also must record our Baltic story in the shared historical memory of Europe. I think it is a great task for Baltic historians, European historians, and those engaged in the policy of historical memory to ensure that our common European historical memory is well-balanced and provides a decent place for the historical experiences of the peoples of the Central and Eastern Europe including the Baltic Way as a very important constituent of this experience.

I would like to call for a deeper and broader exploration of the unique process of restoring the independence of the Baltic States and our experience in the transition from the inferiority to totalitarian occupation to an independent and democratic country governed by the rule of law.





To conclude, I would like to remind you that I am here this afternoon to talk about the new challenges, as the name of the conference also includes the word “continued”.

Those of us who were a part of the Baltic Way then have won this independence, but independence and democracy must be constantly upheld. This is not a one-time exercise. Even nowadays, we have new challenges, new threats, also new perspectives, which we will also discuss during this conference. I wish you all many interesting and new insights! Thank you!





Edgars Rinkēvičs,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

Your Excellency Mr President, Dear Mr Puntulis and Dear Mr Vilks, Dear Friends and Guests! I am truly happy that we can meet here to at the Castle of Light one day before 23 August, before the events commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way to remember how it was and talk about what to do next to ensure the ideals of the Baltic Way would continue living not only in the Baltics, but also in Europe and in the world. I think, everyone of us has our own memories about the Baltic Way, those who participated and those who could not participate, who maybe followed the developments on the radio or TV, as well as those who can get to know about the Baltic Way from chronicles because they were not born yet at the time.

The important thing is to remember several aspects. We have the feeling now that it was a romantic time when everything happened itself, that independence and freedom was given and people simply joined hands on the Baltic Way, but the atmosphere of the time was more threatening.

We should remember that in April 1989, in Tbilisi, a demonstration was oppressed brutally, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) issued announcement about the situation in the Baltic republics.

The clouds over our heads were rather threatening. Therefore, we should appreciate the strong and peaceful demonstration of will of all three Baltic nations even more. Their will reminded the world of the unlawful Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and their longing for freedom. It was impossible to ignore this manifestation neither by Moscow, nor by governments of western countries, foreign ministries and chancelleries. Therefore, we are thankful to those who worked to achieve this grand



goal because it opened up opportunities for next actions in regard to recognition of criminality of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and future developments. This is a special month not only for us, as three days ago, on 19 August 2019, we celebrated the anniversary of Pan-European Picnic that initiated the fall of the Iron Curtain and Berlin Wall. It was followed by the Baltic Way, Velvet Revolution and changes in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, neither in 1989, nor in 1991 we thought that 25 to 30 years later we would experience a certain repetition of history and there would be attempts to divide the world and Europe in different spheres of influence, when the security architecture that was constructed after the Cold War would be destroyed and it would be again possible to occupy and annex a part of another country's territory. Therefore, today it is especially important to talk about how we can create a joint Baltic foreign policy and security policy and impact the direction of Europe and world to remind of the unlawful Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. We can see again that high officials of the Russian Federation try to justify it, to forget about the secret protocols, to justify the aggressive foreign policy. It is our duty in front of those who participated in the Baltic Way 30 years ago and those who fought for the restoration of independence of the Baltic States, as well as in front of those nations who have been impacted positively by the Baltic Way and our success story, and those who try to achieve the same goals of freedom and democracy.

I would like to express a hope that this conference and exchange of thoughts, as well as events tomorrow would give us new strength and impulse to define our joint efforts in the context of Europe and world and inspire those who see the Baltic Way as a manifestation of democracy, freedom and peaceful protest to complete their goals. I hope we will be able to say that the unity and strength born 30 years ago continue to maintain our inner and outer strength. Thank you!





Nauris Puntulis,

Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia

Your Excellency Mr President, Dear Mr Rinkēvičs, Mr Vilks, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Dear participants and guests of the international conference “The Baltic Way. Continued”, as well as witnesses of the Baltic Way present here today. 23 August was a border line in the history of Latvia. It is a date that changed the history and destiny of Latvia twice. On 23 August 1939 two totalitarian superpowers secretly decided the destiny of three Baltic States, and next 50 years was therefore a period full of repressions, suffering and humiliation for the Baltic nations providing very limited opportunities to create their own history. On 23 August 1989 two million people from the Baltics, inspired by the leaders of their independence movements, joined in then unprecedented campaign, Baltic Way, that went through and joined all three Baltic sisters: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

The Baltic Way not only clearly expressed our demand to recognise the unlawfulness of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, crimes of the occupation regime and restoration of historical justice, but also announced loudly and clearly the future goal and resolution of the Baltics to restore the statehood and parliamentary democracy of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and to return home – to Europe. The Baltic Way became a border line of our nations. When it was crossed, it was not possible to return away from the freedom.

For many of us Baltic Way was also a very personal border line. We started to understand and appreciate the significance of each personal choice and involvement. We confirmed that we were able to self-organise, to stand for a common cause, to take responsibility and initiative.



It turned out that the usually introvert Balts could cooperate wonderfully for a joint ride to their section of the Baltic Way by the only zhiguli in the area, they could join hands with total strangers, they could cry in public and express their emotions. During that politically and emotionally intense period, many people in their prime of life at the time for the first time ever believed that their voices and their involvement can impact something, they believed that an independent and democratic Latvia with its own goals and ideals was possible.

Today, 30 years later, many of the goal defined then have been achieved, but the path to ideals continues. Therefore, I would like to emphasise specifically the word “continued” in the title of this conference. As important as it is to talk about the traces of the Baltic Way left in our historical memory, it is important to talk about directions and road signs for our future path in our joint European space that we reached by the Baltic Way.

Today, in the age of globalisation, in Europe of the 21st century, national countries have a lot of challenges and tasks, and those are not simple ones and cannot be solved in one day. In 1989, the Baltic Way joined three Baltic States and today’s conference about the Baltic Way will link the past, present and future of Europe.

It will once again remind us, Europeans of the 21st century, of the power of idea, solidarity and involvement that was the fundament of the Baltic Way 30 years ago.



BALTIC WAY VS. BERLIN WALL

Secret protocols of Hitler–Stalin Pact and their publishing. Political and legal assessment of the Pact at the USSR National Deputy Congress and German Federative Republic. Publishing of Hitler–Stalin Pact and elimination of its consequences in the development of nationally democratic liberations movements of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.



Dr. Angela Merkel,
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Your Excellency Mr President! Dear Citizens of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania!

Thirty years ago, approximately two million people joined hands in the Baltics. On the 50th anniversary of the Hitler–Stalin Pact, they stood for their independence and self-determination rights. They created a human chain from Vilnius through Riga to Tallinn. It was the longest human chain in history. The Baltic Way was a touching and significant phase on the way to the freedom of the Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. A little later, in the German Democratic Republic, women and men demonstrated interest in democratic reforms. After the long and painful decades of forced division of Europe and after the Iron Curtain, nations between the Baltic Sea and Black Sea finally could decide on their own destiny. Europe was ready to be united again.

This year, we also celebrate 15 years of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as members of the European Union and NATO. The Baltic States are close partners and significant allies of Germany. That is the reason why Germany has undertaken responsibility for their safety. For example,



in Lithuania, in the form of NATO presence, and in Estonia, defending the airspace The Baltic Way showed how much people can achieve with peaceful means, if they are united. It showed that it is worth to stand for values. And basic values of Europe. Photographs of these courageous men, women and children who joined hands and sang folk songs touched me deeply at the time. Until today, this human chain, in my mind, is one of the strongest brands of European history of freedom. The participants of the singing revolution became an example and inspiration for all Europeans. I would like to greet you at this special occasion and I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart for your contribution in the freedom of Europe.





Dainis Īvāns,

the First Chairman of the Latvian Popular Front.

Power of Solidarity: Unprecedented Cooperation between Baltic Independence Movements

Dear friends and guests, now, I have to introduce myself with a brief insight in the significance of the Baltic Way, focusing on one of its aspects – solidarity. Solidarity that consisted of emotions and longing for lawfulness and readiness to get in a fight for our own freedom, restoration of independence in the Baltics.

Five years ago, I attended a conference at the University of Latvia dedicated to the Baltic Way, and the leader of the Polish movement “Solidarity” [“Solidarność”], Lech Wałęsa, had sent a telegram that he was still standing at the Baltic Way, because Baltic Way was an important element in domino effect that destroyed the totalitarian system in the Central and Eastern Europe and its symbol – the Berlin Wall. For many of the younger generation, in fact, even those who are around forty now, the facts of the Baltic Way are not known or clear.

We, the generation who were in their thirties at the time, do not remember a lot of things or we remember things slightly differently, based on today's feelings. I will try to remind you of the evolution of solidarity during the creation and preparation of the Baltic Way.

A human chain of the Baltic nations was organised on 23 August 1989 by the Latvian Popular Front, Estonian Popular Front “Rahvarinne” and Lithuanian movement “Sąjūdis”. Firstly, we as organisers planned it to be a grand protest manifestation against the agreement between Moscow and Berlin that, as we know, caused World War Two and the following Holocaust, communist genocide and occupation of the Baltic States.



At 7.00 p.m., we joined hands, the bells of Baltic churches were ringing from Tallinn, through Riga to Vilnius and back. Three magical words were in the air: “laisve” [“freedom” in Lithuanian], “vabadus” [“freedom” in Estonian], “brīvība” [“freedom” in Latvian]. The tragic day of mourning or black ribbons, as it is called in the West, was suddenly turned into our celebration of victory. It was a real triumph of three nations. The functionaries of the Kremlin who were able to turn the world into radioactive dust at the time, were panicking when they watched the video recordings of the Baltic Way.

“They are leaving, we cannot hold them any more, unless we do not use tanks,” that is how [Mikhail] Gorbachev’s, the President of the USSR at the time, counsel, [Anatoly] Chernyaev remembered the moment in the Kremlin. The participants of the Baltic Way gained unwavering confidence that we were going in the right direction.

On the outside, however, nothing had changed. Occupation troops, the Committee for State Security (KGB) and military industrial complex of the USSR were still in the territory of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Moscow continued colonisation of the Baltics, but the rapid turn had happened in the society and its confidence, and that decided the further course of events. At the time, the solidarity of victims that we had had over entire period of occupation, turned into the solidarity of fighters. The solidarity of the Baltics as victims of the Hitler–Stalin Pact most likely started long time ago, along with the battles of our national partisans after World War Two and suffering in Gulag camps. Our culture urged us to get into a non-violent fight against armed strangers, for example, poet, Māris Čaklais wrote poem “Kaugurieši” in 1969 where a slogan appeared “with fortitude against troops” that became a motto of the Baltic Way in Latvia.

Solidarity of the Baltic nations and readiness for an open fight for freedom in the form of the Baltic Way, as the world knows it now, emerged, in my opinion, around 1987. It started with events dedicated to



commemoration of victim repressions that were not widely attended yet at the time. Those were followed by meetings condemning the pact between Moscow and Berlin that took place in Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn. Officially it was still a taboo topic in the Soviet Union. Many participants of these meetings from the group “Helsinki-86” were arrested in Riga. TV journalist, Edvīns Inkēns, was the only one who dared to speak the truth about the real reasons of the campaign and the number of participants, and, if I am not mistaken, on air where there was an atmosphere of general condemnation and defamation.

However, the internal and international solidarity grew rapidly after this. A year later, Professor Mavriks Vulfsons provided a comprehensive denunciation of the Hitler–Stalin Pact during the extended plenary meeting of writers. Thousands of people went out on the streets in demonstrations. In the summer of 1988, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian youngsters, during the Song Festival of the Baltic Students in Vilnius, unexpectedly and despite the attempts of the KGB to prevent it hoisted up the banned national flags instead of the Soviet flags. It is important to note that the seemingly grumpy saleswoman of an empty Soviet Lithuanian fabric store found everything necessary to sew the Latvian red-white-red flag when she got to know why the fabric non-existent in the store was necessary.

The congresses establishing the national movements in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were organised on the wave of great enthusiasm. We took the appeal of Heinz Valk to start a non-violent singing revolution expressed on Tallinn’s Song Festival Grounds. The Latvian Popular Front, similarly as the Estonian Popular Front, was created on Song Festival Grounds, and immediately after that the heads of the newly-established movements met in the House of Benjamins in Riga.

Our first joint campaign was collecting signatures against amendments to the Constitution of the USSR which would have made withdrawal from



the USSR impossible even theoretically. In a very short time and in conditions that would make plot for a good thriller, we managed to deliver to Moscow approximately million protest signatures gathered in two weeks that caused certain shock in the Kremlin.

When we first met in the House of Benjamins, the Estonian Popular Front suggested to pass the so called declaration of sovereignty at our countries' High Councils. Latvia was able to achieve that on 28 July 1989 only.

It was already the time when the Latvian Popular Front and Latvians in exile were discussing the programme to restore independence completely. Passing of declarations of sovereignty of the Baltic republics that initially caused negative reaction of the local Soviet government and the Kremlin, however, after some time, the declarations of sovereignty were passed in almost entire Soviet Union.

The Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian languages that were almost entirely excluded from the official everyday Soviet discourse were – and let's remember that it happened almost simultaneously – declared the official languages, the national symbols were rehabilitated, and we could not do it separately, we had to do it all together. During the meeting at the House of Benjamins, we agreed to maintain close relations and the heads of the national movements became close friends. But when did the Baltic Way in the form we talk about today start?

Possibly, the Baltic Way had already emerged somewhere secretly in the West where the exiles organised the days of black ribbons and continuously maintained the fact of non-recognition of the occupation of the Baltics, they tirelessly appealed to governments and politicians of their home countries.

However, one of the members of the Latvian Popular Front, editor of the newspaper "Soviet Youth" ["Padomju Jaunatne"], later "Latvian Youth" ["Latvijas Jaunatne"], Andrejs Cīrulis has mentioned that the beginning



of the extensive Baltic Way as a political process dates back to 22 March 1989. It might be, as this is when the first more or less democratic election took place in the Soviet Union, and despite justified concerns that participation in formation of Soviet institutions might legitimise the occupation reign, we decided to take the parliamentary way of restoration of independence which was seemingly in line with the Soviet laws. The election was a remarkable victory for the Estonian Popular Front, as well as Latvian Popular Front and Lithuanian movement “Sąjūdis”.

To establish a joint platform of Baltic deputies for participation at the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, in the middle of May 1989, we convened the so called Baltic Parliamentary Assembly, the assembly of national movements. Many will remember that long bus lines with 500 delegates from each national movement together with volunteers, interpreters and journalists went to the Assembly. The Baltic Assembly documents, for the first time, show our joint path to Baltic freedom. And it should be emphasised that it was also our return to our native Europe.

Although, the resolutions of the Baltic national movements were taken in long discussions, Estonians as hosts of the Assembly contributed the most in preparing these resolutions. At the Baltic Assembly, a working programme of the first ever oppositional group of Baltic deputies at the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR was passed. The Assembly stipulated that the mission of the deputies was to start investigation and recognise the Hitler–Stalin Pact as null and void. The national movement Baltic Assembly essentially laid the basis for the current Parliamentary Assembly of the Baltic States and established the Baltic Council of the movement leaders that had a significant role in organising the Baltic Way. Estonian linguist and enthusiast of the Liv culture, Matti Hint, read out the declaration of rights of the Baltic nations that was later changed into the appeal of the Baltic Way on 23 August 1989.





Today, the appeal sounds as strong, encouraging, fair and far-sighted as then. On 13 May 1989, in the central square of Tallinn, a song that, we might say, has become the Baltic anthem, “The Baltics Are Waking Up” [“Atmostas Baltija”] was played live in public in three languages. Nobody had ordered the composer, Boriss Rezniks, to create the song. He came to the building of the Popular Front, on Vecpilsētas Street, where the Popular Front Museum is located now, gave me a cassette and offered the song. The enthusiasm of the Baltic Way urged self-initiative, selflessness and self-organisation in people. When it got dark in the evening of 13 May 1989, me with the representative of the Estonian movement “Rahvarinne”, Edgar Savisaar, and leader of the movement “Sajūdis”, Vytautas Landsbergis, in a pub in Tallinn proposed a toast with a drink the taste of which I do not remember any more, I do remember the toast very precisely: “Friends, let’s not allow the year 1940 to repeat when we were defeated one by one, let’s stick together.”

It was our credo of solidarity which we experienced deeply personally and transformed it to all three our national movements. To me, the events of the time reminded of some kind of blood bet of the Balts and Fenno-Ugrian people. The Assembly itself reminded of a rather wonderful blood bet. The Assembly united the Baltic deputies who went to the session of the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR in Moscow.

A small but united and persistent drop in the mass of more than 1,300 USSR deputies where the tone was set by the passive aggressive majority, as it was called by Professor Yuri Afanasiev from Moscow. Of course, we did not hoe for understanding of this majority, however, the inter-regional group of Russian democrats became the supporters of the Balts.

In my opinion, the demonstrative solidarity gesture of the member of the Latvian Popular Front, Vilens Tolpežņikovs, during the opening of the congress was epochal. He asked to honour Georgians with a moment of



silence who were killed by the Soviet Army during a demonstration on 9 April 1989. Generals and officers of the KGB, who had supported this violence, stood up grumbling. They were scared by this great power of solidarity that permeated the appeal of Tolpežņikovs.

The Latvian delegation submitted a claim to exonerate the repressed nation of Crimean Tatars who had been deported from their land and, pursuant to the Soviet laws, they were treated as criminals. Andrei Sakharov, after meeting the Baltic group, insisted that congress cannot start working unless it has not asked for forgiveness of the Soviet nations affected by the communist genocide. We are still waiting for this apology. After the bright and justified speeches of the Baltic deputies the passive aggressive majority of the congress started literally hit their feet to the ground and screamed that Popular Fronts had occupied the platform of the Palace of Congresses of the Kremlin.

In the end, however, the congress established an investigation commission of the Hitler–Stalin Pact and included Balts in the commission. Then we had to prove to Moscow that the path to independence is not a whim of a few leaders of national movements or, as Gorbachev said extremists, but that it is our nation’s wish. We had to convince also western politicians who were fascinated by Gorbachev and had taken an expectant position. They either had a naive belief or they saw advantages in the situation.

It is not true that the empire of evil can change only as a result of a whim of the good czar. In the summer of 1989, there were not many such supporters of the Baltic independence efforts as Carl Bildt, who is here today. On 15 June 1989, if I remember correctly, in Panevežys, during the first unrecorded meeting of the Baltic Council, we came to a suggestion of the human chain. On 15 July 1989, in Pärnu, the Baltic Council signed the historical Memorandum of the Baltic Way. On 16 August, in Cēsis, the text of the joint appeal was signed and we



discussed the last organisational matters. The biggest miracle today is that this global campaign really took place thanks to hundreds of coordinators.

Along with organisers from the Latvian and Estonian Popular Fronts and Lithuanian “Sąjūdis”, we should remember about hundreds of journalists, photographers, film and TV operators. They risked but managed to reflect the events honestly and truly. I would like to thank them all without naming them all. As well as I would like to thank the units and groups of the Latvian Popular Front, their leaders who ensured that people arrived at the planned road sections with great accuracy. And it was particularly important because coordination of the campaign via radio, which was still under the communist rule, was prohibited in the morning of 23 August 1989. We could not organise this national campaign via live broadcast. As opposed to Lithuania and Estonia, Moscow obviously hoped that the Baltic Way would be deranged in the section of Latvia, where the highest concentration of the USSR troops was and the proportion of the main nation.

At the same time, on 23 August 1989, counter-campaigns of the Baltic Way were organised. The opponents of Latvia’s freedom gathered at the notorious Victory Memorial in Pārdaugava. Leadership of the Latvian Popular Front, after losing the opportunity to coordinate the manifestation via radio, relied on the members of the Popular Front only that they would do what they had promised. That they would not get scared, would not spread fake news, would not deceive those who had already gone to their sections of the road, and that artificial traffic jams would not be provoked. It was important to ensure that the Soviet tanks would not drive on the Baltic Way.

We went to the Baltic Way like on a knife-edge with hope and faith. There was no way back. When I myself stood in the Baltic chain on the Latvian and Estonian border, I could finally breathe lighter that it was alright.



Then my speech addressed to the participants of the Baltic Way was broadcast on the radio recorded by the radio journalist Normunds Beļskis. At that moment, people had the sense that the Baltic Way was being led.

Knowledge about the Baltic Way does not allow us to dream about conspiracies and goodwill of certain rulers of the world destiny, permitting the Baltic Way to lead Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians out of the Soviet nightmare. It was the strength of unprecedented solidarity of our nations. The heirs of Stalin stepped back and the closed gate to Europe opened.

After the Baltic Way, the support of the West increased significantly. The President of the USA, George Bush Senior warned the Kremlin that the USA do not consider the matter of the Baltics to be an internal issue of the USSR. The strength of solidarity increased day by day. With satisfaction and even happiness, we saw how the seemingly unshakeable Berlin Wall fell. And the Kremlin blamed the Baltic Way for this. I have also witnessed in the corridors of the Kremlins that Gorbachev had to justify himself in front of the furious generals that he had allowed Germany to unite and that was a big mistake in the opinion of generals. Gorbachev had replied that the Baltics are to blame, because they had shaken the internal political situation in the Soviet Union. At the time, we cheered the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. After the Baltic Way and the overthrow of [Nicolae] Ceaușescu in Bucharest our solidarity with other nations of the Soviet Union grew. Although Kremlin in its announcement of 6 August 1989 called the Baltic Way the national hysterics and said that a question mark has been raised about the existence of the Baltic nations, the reaction in the Soviet republics, longing for change, was completely different. The Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, held four months later on 24 December 1989, in two dramatic votes decided that the secret protocols of Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, which have been denied until this day, were criminal from the moment of signing.



I think, that to a great extent it was the victory of the Baltic Way.

In the photographs now we can see that on the Baltic Way 30 year ago along with the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian national flags the Ukrainian blue–yellow flag, Georgian white with a red cross, and Belarusian white–red–white flags were hoisted. That showed solidarity.

Six months after the Baltic Way, Ukrainians organised their freedom chain from Lviv to Kiev. In Moldova, Romanians joined hand in the Soviet-occupied capital of Bessarabia, Kishinev. The Baltic Way facilitated irreversible collapse of the USSR. We can ask now, whether it is a coincidence that in Belarus, where during the Baltic Way the tone was set by the Belarusian Popular Front and the white–red–white flags were hoisted, a regime that has returned to the Soviet colours rules. Is it a coincidence that part of the free Georgia and Ukraine who walked the same Baltic Way with us have been occupied by the revanchist Russia?

Is it a coincidence that Putin's regime, in the form of the National Guard, has restored the internal troops for the war with their citizens? The same troops we demanded to disband in 1989 in one of our resolutions at the Baltic Assembly.

We, of course, understand and suspect what the goal of Putin's aggression is, therefore, we are shocked, for example, by Gerhard Schröder who supports the construction of the Russian weapon – Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline – at the expense of security and lives of Ukrainians.

We feel rather odd when we see that the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, with a naiveté of a school boy, drinks with the person who justifies the Hitler–Stalin Pact, Lieutenant-Colonel of the KGB, Putin.

We are not surprised that the successor of our friend and fellow, Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman, pays a friendly visit to Moscow during Putin's regime cult celebration.



For us, the heirs of the Baltic Way, have to speak up and blush, when the Minister of Economics of Latvia, overwhelmed by populism or misunderstood patriotism, announces that in the expense of our and Lithuanian security we will generate turnover of a nuclear power plant in Ostrovets built by the Belarusian regime.

The lesson of the Baltic Way is that losers from friendships with authoritarian regimes and dictators are those who crawl to these dictatorships and think that they would gain benefits from it. The question of today is whether those took the path of the Baltic Way might be left alone again? I do not think so, if we appreciate and honour the strength of solidarity of the Baltics.

Several years ago Catalans visited us at the Popular Front Museum and researched the history of the Baltic Way. We know that Catalans created their own chain of freedom at the time. Recently, I think four months ago, a PhD student from the University of Hong Kong visited me at the Popular Front Museum. She was interested in photographs.

She wanted me to tell her about the organisational matters of the Baltic Way and later she recorded a one and a half hours long interview with me. When I asked her why she needed that, she answered: "I will show it to students of Hong Kong. For them to learn how to fight for democracy and the rule of communist China in Hong Kong." Now we know that tomorrow a human chain will be organised in Hong Kong to honour 30 years' anniversary of the Baltic Way.

But one thing is clear – the Baltic Way continues today as a grand example and vision of perfect solidarity for today's Europe and the world. Let's be proud of it! Let's study the Baltic Way and share the power of the Baltic Way with other nations and the world!



Lauri Mälksoo,

Professor of the University of Tartu

Hitler–Stalin Pact and International Law

Mr President and dear attendants!

It is a great pleasure for me to speak at this beautiful occasion here, in Riga. I attended the event on 23 August 1989 on the Estonian and Latvian border as a 14-year-old. Time has passed and 30 years later we can discuss the importance of this event together in politics, in our common Baltic fate, but also in international law.

I think, that the struggle for the annulment of Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (in English often referred to as Hitler–Stalin Pact) and its secret protocols, it is a very successful example of the Baltic *lawfare*, you know the word in English “warfare”, but sometimes nations argue about different very serious things based on the law, and, I think, the Baltic argument with Moscow in the end of the 1980s was a lot about the international law, what it meant and, of course, about what had happened in the past.

And we all know and remember, how hard it was to argue with the Soviet Union about things like that, because it was kind of a parallel world really, because they had constructed a completely different reality to themselves in terms of facts what had happened. It was easy for them to deny certain facts, so sometimes you had to have this argument “is there this microphone in front of me or not.” They would say: “No, it is not in front of you.” And you would have to prove that it is there. But – how do I prove that?

And there were many more sophisticated arguments, although the line that, you know, did the secret protocols really exist, was used almost until the very end and it is very interesting that right now in Moscow its



Russian, former Soviet, original has been exhibited. So indeed, it did exist, it happened and Soviets had it, too, and now it is shown. What would interest me is with what spirit it is shown.

You know, today with sort of regret and remorse or maybe with pride. “Look, look at what we can do. We are strong, we are powerful. We can divide up other places.”

I thought about the late 1980s and the famous quote from Milan Kundera’s novel “The Unbearable Lightness of Being”, where he says, I think referring to Solzhenitsyn, that the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

I would like to paraphrase this sentence and say that the struggle of small countries for continued existence is also the struggle for the international law to protect them because it is not obvious that international law does it. The problem with the international law is that there are or over time have been different interpretations of what it means. If freedom of contract, so to speak, between sovereign states is unlimited, then why not allow them to make deals over the head of smaller countries.

If you read, for example, the documents on the partition of Poland in the end of the 18th century, it was done through treaties; the three powers that did it, it was written down who gets what. This was international law, partitioning Poland was international law for these countries who did it in the end of the 18th century.

The reason why Soviets maybe lost to this *lawfare* against the Baltics was that the gap between what they had been saying since the 1930s actually, and not only since the 1940s, and what they did in the Baltics could not be bridged. It was too extravagant, because there were all those, not only the famous Paris Treaty or Briand–Kellogg Pact renouncing war in 1928, but various regional treaties such as the Litvinov protocol or the non-aggression pact with the Baltics, so if you put what happened together



with what these treaties said, there is no other way than to conclude that these acts were illegal. One of the most interesting Russian, or Soviet I should say more correctly, arguments in 1989 was that “OK, so let’s assume that it existed, it happened. But what follows from it?”

Even the international lawyer of Estonian origin from Moscow, Rein Müllerson, seemed to make his point in the article in “Pravda” saying “Yeah, even if it existed, does it directly mean unlawfulness?”.

Because everybody who has studied Moscow’s foreign policy over the time knows that they are the world masters of this counter argument saying: “How about you? Look, at what you have done. Look, what Americans have done or someone else has done in similar circumstances.” And indeed, if you look more specifically at these so-called spheres of influence we have more of those agreements in World War Two. Even after the end of World War Two, the winning Allies, Western superpowers, and the Soviet Union argue over places like Romania and Greece. They essentially talk about spheres of influence.

Now, what made it more drastic in the Baltic case is that it was not just a question of who would become a popular democracy and who would stay in the capitalist camp, but it was the very existence of these nations as independent nations that Moscow wanted to revise.

Although this is another tricky level of these conversations with Moscow, namely, their constitutional doctrine stipulated that Soviet republics were sovereign. So they should not want anything else, they already were sovereign. And again, it is like with this microphone – how do you argue with a power that takes certain old historical, western, if you wish, concepts and gives a different context to the content, and you have so many layers of argument.

Now, international law throughout time has had two streams: one stream is moralising stream. In earlier centuries, it was called the natural law.



Certain things are wrong. They should not be done. It is wrong to take away the independence of small nations without consulting with them. I think, essentially the Baltic argument is a natural law argument; of course, there were treaties from the 1930s and 1920s supporting that, but ultimately the Baltic language has been a moralising language. One cannot do this. It should not be done like this.

There is another stream in international law that has always existed and the famous Melian dialogue in the work of Thucydides, the Greek history writer, exemplifies that. In a conversation between Athens and Melos, negotiators and Athens make the point that does not invoke the argument of right, because we both know that the real law of the universe is that the strong ones take what they can and the weak – do what they must. This is more or less the meaning. And this is the so-called doctrine of realism that international law, in the end, has to comply with always and, therefore, only moralising language does not fit.

I would like to wrap this up with a thought that, yes, the Baltics, their lawyers, their nations won this battle of *lawfare* from 1989 to 1992.

However, the main manifestation of this victory is not that we are independent, but it is that our independence is based on the state continuity doctrine. This is what this occupation argument enabled, because Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, they are all independent now, there is no difference in that. The difference is that the occupation argument, the illegality of Hitler–Stalin Pact, allowed us to create different kinds of states and to actually break free from Russia which number of other states on certain level have not perhaps still done. This is the positive message, the optimistic part.

The negative, more pessimistic part of my message is that perhaps human history does not develop in a linear way, that we are approaching progress and enlightenment and more justice, but maybe it goes in



spirals and, in last years, we have had too many manifestations of kind of roughening of mores, it is actually again possible to speak this language that you know – you are small, what do you want, shut up. And not only Russia does that in today’s world, unfortunately.

From this follows the task for countries like us – the three of us, we have to stand against that. We have to make our claims, our points peacefully, in a smart and reasoned and rational way based on international law that should not only be anchored in power, in spheres of influence but also in the possibility of smaller nations to exist and go their own ways. Thank you!





Dr. Richard Herzinger,
journalist for newspaper “Welt/Welt am Sonntag”

From the Baltic Way to the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Perception of Struggle of Baltics in Germany

Thank you very much for the invitation. It is wonderful to be back in Riga again and I feel honoured that I am the first German speaker today after Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

President Levits always mentions the different memories in Europe and how they differ and my remarks are aimed at some aspects of these differences in memory in regard to Germany, because, if in a conversation in Germany one mentions 23 August as a historically significant day, one usually sees clueless and questioning faces, even people who have a general knowledge of history usually know little or nothing about this date.

I do not have to tell you, of course, which date, which events, I am talking about: the conclusion of Hitler–Stalin Pact in 1939 and the Baltic Way in 1989. In the Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and in the Baltics, these historical events are obviously very strongly present and shape the contemporary political considerations.

In the Western Europe, however, they are at best noted passing by. Well, yes, in 2009, the European Parliament proclaimed 23 August as a Europe–wide day of remembrance of victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, but in Germany, and I guess it is pretty much the same in other Western European countries, there is hardly anyone who takes notice of it or even knows about it.

To be sure, the freedom struggle of the Baltics against the Soviet tyranny had been followed with fundamental sympathy by most West Germans



at the time, but in comparison to the developments in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia or Romania, it was perceived as a mere peripheral matter and soon the sympathy was mixed with concern that the dissolution of the Soviet Union could lead to chaos, unleash unbridled nationalist forces or encourage the hardliners in the Soviet power apparatus to strike back viciously. Or both.

Germany, of course, was not the only western country, which favoured the survival of the Soviet Union in the interests of stability. In fact, all the big western powers, the US, as well as the Great Britain and France thought and acted that way.

Among Germans, however, there was an additional special feeling of correctitude and admiration towards Mikhail Gorbachev who, they thought, had done so much for Germans and they felt he deserved to be backed up at any rate.

The German narrative of liberation in 1989 and 1990 boiled down to the assessment that Gorbachev or Gorby, as he fondly was called in Germany, gave freedom to Europe and unity to us, Germans.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, one of the most distinguished post-war German writers, wrote an essay already in 1989 the title of which became very inspiring: "The Heroes of Retreats" (*"Die Helden des Rueckzugs"*). In the essay, Gorbachev appeared as a prototype of a true hero, which is actually an anti-hero willing to give up positions voluntarily that could only be held by massive, senseless use of force.

The fact that Enzensberger's title was able to make such an enormous impact, reflects the mood preventing Germany following 1989 and 1990 in which heroism is regarded as a phenomenon of yesterday. That is no longer needed because Europe is now pacified, Germany is, as the phrase goes, surrounded by friends. For Germany, the upheaval of 1989 and 1990 indeed seemed to have resulted in reaching the optimum history



can offer — the country was united with peaceful means in democracy and prosperity.

To a certain extent, this explains why German politics and society today are so reluctant to respond firmly and adequately to the new threats to peace and freedom like Russian aggression. It is hard for them to admit to themselves that the ideal state of affairs that Germany seem to have achieved in 1990, when it was united, was not the last word of history. And so they stick to keep this situation mentally, although it has long changed fundamentally since then.

In the Eastern Europe, and especially in the former Soviet republics, Gorbachev's image was, of course, obviously far less rosy. There he was seen above all the party leader, who wanted to reform the communist system, but with reforms he also wanted to preserve it. And who else in the Baltics in January 1991 was ready even to use force and violence to secure the continued existence of the Soviet Union. Leftover of the *Gorbymania* in Germany today is the continuing fixation of German foreign policy thinking about Moscow. The reflexive question that is often first asked by the German public when it comes to developments in the east of the continent and Germany's own political stance towards it, this question is — how will Russia react to this?

The fear that Moscow could be too much provoked let the German government, for example, to torpedo Georgia's and Ukraine's inclusion in the NATO's military action plan in 2008, which was promoted by the United States. The Kremlin responded to this anticipatory concession with the attack on Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the covert invasion of eastern Ukraine in the same year. Putin would probably have no guts to commit any of these actions, if Georgia and Ukraine had been brought under the umbrella of the western defence alliance before.



The Kremlin interpreted the German gesture, which was intended to signal its willingness to cooperate, as a sign of weakness and the invitation to push forward, to go forward with aggression. In the light of freedom struggle of the Baltics, Hitler–Stalin Pact also plays a certain role in today’s German historical consciousness. It is regarded more as an episodic interlude, which became historically obsolete with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The pact of 1939 was far more than just a temporary tactical document and represented much more and signified more than just a temporary tactical move for both dictators. I cannot go into the long ties that reach back to today, the ties between the far right in Germany and the Soviet Union and its ideology, but I can assure you these ties were very strong and have a very significant meaning today.

Although both Hitler and Stalin probably assumed that it would eventually come to a fight, to a final confrontation between them, for once they concentrated on the limiting and eliminating their common enemy – the West. Help of the Soviets kept the German war machine going with supplies of raw materials. Anti-fascist literature landed on the index in the Soviet Union and facilitated Hitler to make the decision to conclude the Pact, Stalin had removed the Jewish Foreign Minister, Litvinov, from the office. The Nazi Foreign Minister, Joachim Ribbentrop, who negotiated the pact, enthusiastically reported to his Fuehrer that when he was with the communist functionaries in Moscow, he felt like among the party comrades.

After the fall of the Nazi empire, Stalin retained the booty appropriated in 1939, in accordance with Hitler. Over the decades, however, the awareness of the extent to which the pact of the dictators had continued to affect historical and political reality after this day had decreased in the Federal Republic of Germany. This had looked differently in the beginning. In the early years, as the Federal Republic was marked by anti-communism, Hitler–Stalin Pact was regarded as an exemplary evidence of a coincidence of two totalitarian systems, which only appear to be antagonistic.

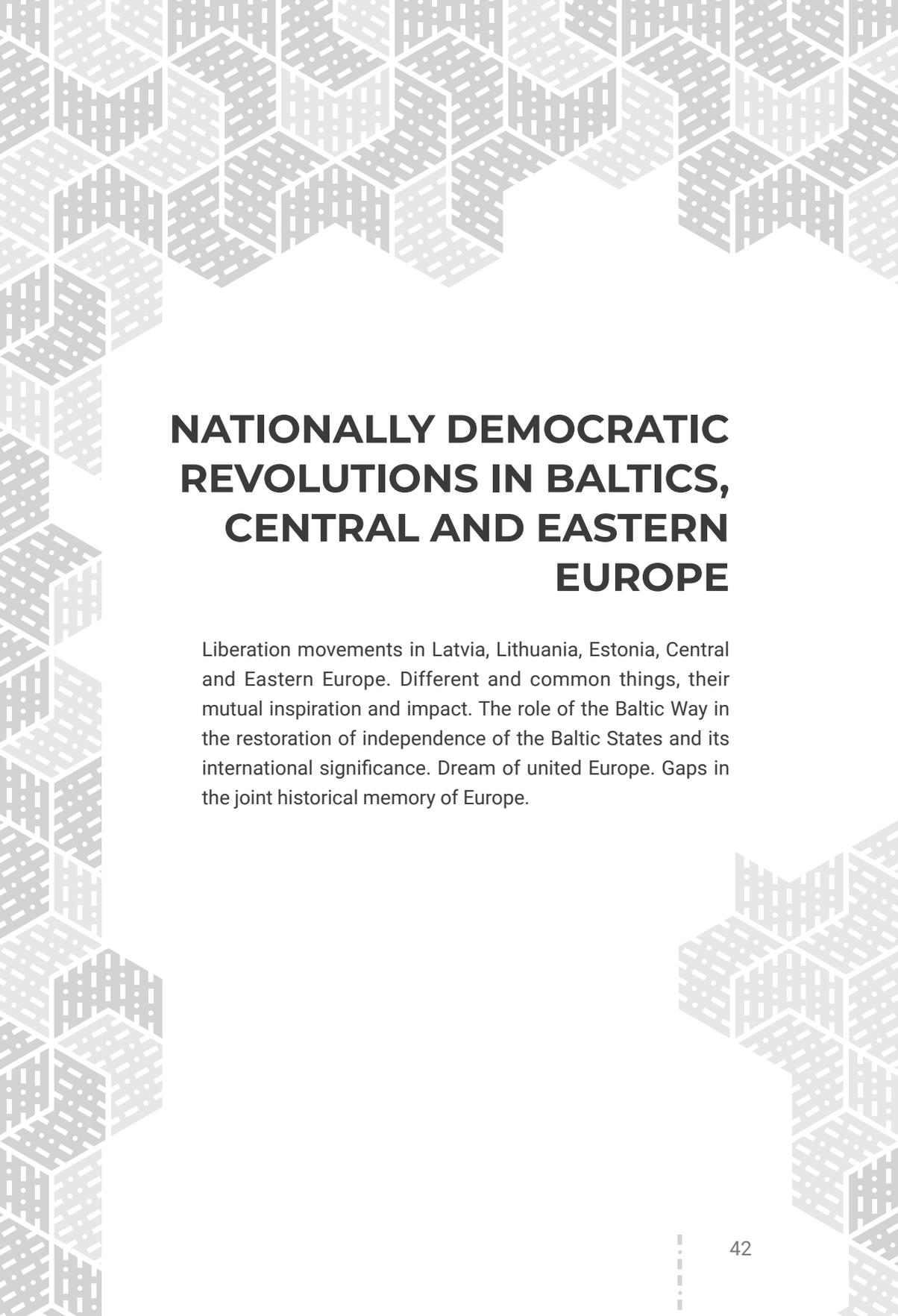


The view that the Soviet communism was the counterpart of the National socialism, was something like a part of the German state reasoning in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was by no means only true for the right wing. The saying that communism was red painted fascism comes from Kurt Schumacher, the first post-war Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and concentration camp survivor. Since the mid-1960s, however, there has been a paradigmatic shift in this respect. With the policy and under the influence of the left student movement, later renamed to “68”, the totalitarianism theory fell into disrepute. It was accused of having provided a melodious alibi for the German repression of guilt.

Pointing the fingers at communists as the Nazis of today, made it easy for the post-war Germans to distract attention from the fact that countless Nazis of yesterday are sitting unchallenged in influential positions in the Federal Republic.

No doubt, much of this criticism of the early Federal Republic was justified. But over the years, this criticism tended to fall to other extreme and to discredit any structural comparison between the totalitarian dictatorships as inadmissible equation and relativisation of the unique historical dimension of the Nazi crimes. “Anti-communist” became a swearword, a synonym for reactionary. It was thereby lost from sight that the history of the twentieth century could not be understood without investigating the faithful interaction of the big totalitarian systems and that Hitler–Stalin Pact produced the kind of primeval fear among the Eastern Europeans that Germany and Russia could once again agree over their heads.

Different perceptions of 23 August in the Western and Eastern Europe are an example of how far the different historical memories of Europeans are still apart. The effects of this continuing division of memory on the difficult process of European unification must not be underestimated. Thank you!



NATIONALLY DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS IN BALTICS, CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Liberation movements in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Central and Eastern Europe. Different and common things, their mutual inspiration and impact. The role of the Baltic Way in the restoration of independence of the Baltic States and its international significance. Dream of united Europe. Gaps in the joint historical memory of Europe.



Trivimi Velliste,
former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

Hildigund Neubert,
Board Member of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, former member of
opposition movement of the German Democratic Republic.

Dr. Luboš Švec,
Professor of University of Charles in Prague.

Aleksandras Abišala,
former Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania.

Jerzy Marek Nowakowski,
former Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Latvia.

Moderator: **Dr. Edijs Bošs,** journalist.

Edijs Bošs: Let me start by introducing our panel here, which I am very honoured to chair today. Trivimi Velliste. Obviously he does not need to be introduced to a large segment of this audience. But to those younger people among you I would like to introduce him. A legendary participant of the Estonian freedom movement. Back in those days, he was the Head of the Estonian Heritage Society, an NGO which did a tremendous and dangerous job at that time reigniting the sense of the Estonian national identity. Mr Velliste has been active in politics ever since, a veteran lawmaker, and the Estonian Foreign Minister from 1992 to 1994, as well as served as his country's ambassador to the United Nations. Thank you very much for coming today and joining us!

Dr. Jerzy Marek Nowakowski. Thank you very much for coming! He joins us from Poland and he is someone who knows the Baltics really, really well. In the late 1980s, he was responsible for the links of the Polish movement "Solidarity" ["Solidarność"] with the Lithuanian anti-



communist opposition. He is a respected political analyst, he has advised Polish leaders, particularly on issues of the Polish eastern policy. He has now ended the diplomatic career, as I understand, but he is well known and probably you remember Mr Nowakowski because he was the ambassador of Poland to Latvia from 2010 to 2014. Thank you very much for coming!

We have Hildigund Neubert here as well. She was born into a religious family in communist East Germany, and she initially trained as a musician, but in 1989, she was among the founders of the anti-communist movement, which brought down East Germany regime. Back in those days, she was also an active supporter of Baltic independence movements. After the reunification of Germany, she devoted herself to the important task of researching the darkest pages of East Germany's past so that the regime's victims could see historical justice. She also served in the government of the German state of Thuringia and is currently with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Thank you very much for coming!

Dr. Aleksandras Abišala joins us from Kaunas. He has been an entrepreneur, businessman for a really, really long time now and has not been in politics for a long time. But during the Awakening, he was right in the epicentre of events, a senior member of "Sąjūdis." He was elected to the parliament, voted for Lithuania's Declaration of Independence. He was also the member of "Sąjūdis" government, and the Prime Minister of Lithuania in 1992. Thank you very much for coming!

Dr. Luboš Švec joins us from Prague. He is Associate Professor of Charles University. And my guess is that Luboš, among all Czechs, knows the Baltics the best, don't you agree? I take that as a "yes." The Baltics has been an enduring research interest to him. He has also written specifically about the spill-over effects of revolutions and in his published work he has analysed this interplay between Baltic independence movements and what happened in Czechoslovakia at that time.





Thank you very much all of you for coming!

Our panel is dedicated to a range of interconnected topics. We are most interested in gaining additional perspective on the interplay between the Baltic liberation movements and what happened in the Central and Eastern Europe at the time. We have a tremendous panel specifically designed to try and tackle that issue. Let's try and find out more about that. We are all so obviously interested in your views on how this event the anniversary of which we are celebrating, the Baltic Way, helped to achieve the objective of Baltic independence, what the practical political consequences were of these events 30 years ago and maybe not just practical political consequences for the Balts themselves, but also from the perspective of others in Central and Eastern Europe.

The idea of the domino effect has been invoked repeatedly in this. Was there really a domino effect? What is the view of the Central and Eastern Europe? Can we actually argue about that little bit as well? At the end of the panel, I will also ask our panellists to reflect on the events 30 years ago, what they tell us about today and if they offer certain guidance for the future as well. Well, we will leave that to the end of the debate.

I will give each panellist five minutes for introductory remarks and then it is a discussion. Unfortunately, we do not have the technical means or the time to answer questions from the audience. Therefore, I guess, you are stuck with me to ask the right questions.

Before we begin though, let's get to know you better. I want all of you to give me in a couple of sentences, a description of yourself in the summer of 1989. Can we do that very briefly? I will begin. I was 9 years old. I remember in the summer of 1989 spending a lot of time practicing my karate moves. I thought that could help the independence movement. It turned out that was not, you know, necessary from a kid like myself. Well, I was a small kid, but that was my first political education, part of the reason why I am here, right?



But probably karate is not the thing that you were doing back then. You were involved in more important things. Trivimi, would you begin? Who was Trivimi Velliste in the summer of 1989? What is your most vivid memory? Is it the Baltic Way or something else?

Trivimi Velliste: Thank you! Well on 23 August 1989 I was the Chairman of the Estonian Heritage Society. At that time, it was a large scale grassroots organisation. I was contacted by an American journalist from Moscow. He was a reporter for “Washington Post” from Moscow and he was planning to visit Tallinn. He asked me, if I could accompany him just along the Baltic Chain, the Baltic Way. Since I am an English philologist, I could speak English already at that time, so I was his interpreter and we were walking along the Baltic Way on the main street of Tallinn, downtown, Pärnu maantee. And, of course, he was putting all kinds of questions to ordinary Estonian people and I was interpreting and we went on and on and on. So this is what I did on that day.

E.B.: All right. Jerzy, what were you doing? So, Jerzy, your summer of 1989. Not necessarily August.

Jerzy Marek Nowakowski: Well, the summer of 1989 for us in Poland was an extremely active time. Let’s remember, it was the time after the first semi-free election in Poland, on 4 June 1989. And we established the first fully independent institution – the Polish Senate. And all the bureaucratic structures around this Senate. Me, personally, I was engaged in the establishment of the first think-tank at the Centre for International Studies of the Polish Senate. In addition to this, together with our current Foreign Minister, Jacek Czaputowicz, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with my future friend, the founder of the Centre of the Eastern Studies, Marek Karp, we travelled to Lithuania every week to keep the contact with “Sajūdis.” Exactly every week. We travelled by car to Mr [Vytautas] Landsbergis personally, asking him how it was in Lithuania, what the situation of “Sajūdis” was and coming back reporting this to “Solidarity.”





E.B. So, yes, it is actually important to remember that in Poland the process of change was already along the way. It had already started a bit earlier, you were showing the way, right? Important to bear in mind for our further discussion. Thank you for this! What about you? What about your summer of 1989?

Hildigund Neubert: Summer for us was still the time before the revolution. Differently than in Poland. Perhaps I could describe the strongest emotional impact as a set of rapid developments. It was 1 October 1989. On this day, in our apartment, one of the first democratic parties was elected, it was established for democracy – it was a new democratic beginning. We were all slightly scared. We were afraid we would be arrested. We had three small children, that is why I took my children and escaped the apartment in the morning and returned only late at night. It was a situation of fear, however, fear was not dominating in our actions anymore. Three weeks later, I together with my children participated at a demonstration and it was a totally different feeling. It was suddenly as if we were on the way and we were doing something useful! And the danger that we might be arrested was gone. We were creating something, it was a huge feeling of new beginnings and joy. During the demonstration, we were joined by a poet and we talked with her a bit. At some point she said: “I have to leave you now, I just need to scream a bit!”

E.B.: Thank you very much for sharing these memories! Aleksandras, introduce us to Aleksandras Abišala of 30 years ago.

Aleksandras Abišala: You asked about the most vivid memories. The most vivid memory of mine is about 23 August and I can summarise it as “Uff, we did it.” Not “Yes, we did it!” as you win in the lottery jackpot or win the basketball game, but after a very hard work. And when until the end you do not know whether you will succeed or not. I was one of the members of staff to organise the Baltic Way in Lithuania and I was





directly in charge of filling in 70 kilometres long distance where the people from Kaunas region were.

I had a position inside this to moderate meeting of Kaunas “Sajūdis” group representatives that met every week for two to three hours to discuss the issues and it consisted of approximately 600 to 700 people.

Therefore, I was appointed to that position and, in fact, it was rather easy. Despite having no mobile phones and the Internet to communicate and to discuss because those 600–800 people, in fact, represented maybe 2,000–3,000 people, the members of “Sajūdis”, their family members and so on and so on, so generally, it called all the people who just wanted to go to the Baltic Way and to participate.

E.B.: Thank you very much, Aleksandras! I think this is something that is a challenge to explain to the younger generation – how to actually organise this without mobile phones, right? That is going to be a challenge to explain this. Luboš, who were you thirty years ago?

Luboš Švec: In July, I was hitchhiking in East Germany to the border with West Germany, to Eisenach. It was not possible to go on to West Germany, of course, at the time. And I met a young artist and he complained about the situation in East Germany. He said that there were demonstrations in Czechoslovakia but in East Germany nothing happened. I said to him not to worry, and told him it was a matter of few months. Weeks or months. But, of course, I did not predict so quick and rapid and radical development.

My memory from that August – I took part in a demonstration on 21 August 1989 in Prague at the event to commemorate the Soviet invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia.

E.B.: Thank you very much for these memories, trying to help us to visualise yourselves back then and emotions and the environment in which we were operating then.



Let's begin then with the first round of remarks. Let's keep it to five, maybe six, maybe seven minutes each of you on the topic that is our panel's main goal – to observe, to analyse and maybe to learn something more about the interplay between what was taking place in the Baltics and what was taking place in the Central and Eastern Europe.

I think, I go to Jerzy first. By the way, we agreed to be on first name basis in this panel, I am not just very impolite. That is something we agreed upon with panelists. Jerzy, I mean, "Solidarity" was at the core of all of this. I think, it makes a chronological sense to give the floor to you first. Please!

J.M.N.: Thank you very much! Dear Mr President, dear friends!

Apparently, the word "remember" is used mainly by very old people. I do not feel myself like a pensioner, but let me however use it, even abuse it in the short speech.

For millions of Poles the first period of "Solidarity", from 1980 to 1981, was the era that formed "Solidarity." Jacek Kuroń wrote that it was the start of an era in which anything could happen. But I am convinced that this was the time when then delayed ignition bomb was planted under the communist system. Maybe it was the first wave of the storm which destroyed the communism. When I was reading records of the history of "Solidarity" in English on the Internet, I noticed one document was missing. The message of the first congress of "Solidarity" addressed to the working people of the Eastern Europe. Leonid Brezhnev called this document, adopted in September 1981, dangerous and provocative. From today's perspective, the text sounds banal, even mild, but I remember it sounded revolutionary to us then. Let me quote this document, it is not very long. "Delegates, gathered in Gdansk at the first congress of delegates of the independent trade union "Solidarity" send to the workers of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German



Democratic Republic, Rumania and Hungary and all the nations of the Soviet Union, greetings and expression of support! As the first independent trade union in our post-war history, we deeply felt the community of our faith. We assure you that despite the lies spreading in your countries, we are an authentic 10 million workers' organisation formed as a result of the workers' strike. Our goal is to fight for better lives of working people. We support those of you who have decided to embark on a difficult path to fight for our free trade union movement. We believe, that soon your and our representatives will be able to meet to exchange union experiences."

For the first time, the open propaganda line stating that the communist system represented working people was denied. Brezhnev was right – these few banal sentences hit the firm foundation of the system. Also, I remember the strength of the pin of "Solidarity." In entire territory of the Soviet Union, the pins of "Solidarity" were the most sold goods from Poland until 1990. I remember, when Czesław Okińczyc, the founder of the first independent Polish language magazine "Znad Wilii", left Warsaw in 1989, we supplied him several thousand pins of "Solidarity." It was the foundation of the first independent newspaper in the Polish language, newspaper in Vilnius. I also remember, how joyfully we watched everything that happened in late 1980s in the Baltics. We had, as I said, particularly close contacts with Lithuanian "Sąjūdis."

From today's perspective, the direction of the changes seems obvious. But in Poland, after the first semi-free elections held on 4 June 1989, we asked ourselves almost every day: what if Soviets invaded again? Will [Wojciech] Jaruzelski once again lead the army out in the streets? Millions of Estonians, Lithuanians and Latvians, who stood together during the Baltic Way, or in Poland we called it the Baltic Chain, they supported us also on our political way in setting up the first non-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki exactly after the Baltic Way.



We felt that we were not alone. It was extremely important for this decision. Our debate on the in the summer of 1989 was based on some reservations towards the possible Soviet intervention. Then, when we felt that we were not alone, we moved forward faster. Let me move to the next date.

I also remember 21 January 1991 in Riga. Later, as the Polish Ambassador in Riga, I was one of the veterans at the barricade night, because, a week after the criminal Soviet attack at the TV tower in Vilnius, we organised the delegation of the Polish Senate led by the Speaker of the Polish Senate, Andrzej Stelmachowski, and organised an official visit to Riga. We wanted to show support and solidarity towards Latvia.

This is the last remark. I remember Anatolijs Gorbunovs talked with Stelmachowski in the apartment in the hotel “Rīdzene.” Exactly on the opposite side of the street of the Ministry of Interior, in which the Soviet OMON shot the Latvian patriots. Well, and let me say, the OMON were shooting in the hotel lobby, when the two leaders had a discussion on the second floor.

Frankly speaking, it is a pity that the shot glass on the stairs reminiscent of these events was removed by the new owner of the hotel. Thank you!

E.B.: Thank you, Jerzy! Thank you very much! So, if I had to sum up – what the interplay is. You were saying the events in the Baltics allowed the Poles to move. Obviously, the process in Poland was moving on its own, but it helped to move it along quickly with more confidence that there is not going to be a Soviet intervention, right? So, it served as a measurement tool more or less of the temperature of the Soviet Union as to what what the potential counter-reaction could be, and it did, in a very real way, enable you to move forward quicker than it otherwise would have been possible?

J.M.N.: Yes, in some sense – yes! Because the late 1980s, not only in Poland, but in Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Hungary and also in East



Germany was the time of fear. What will be the response of the Soviet Union towards our struggle for independence and democracy? Then we decided to establish the first non-communist government. Let's remember that the ruling Communist party presented the candidate for the Prime Minister. It was Mr [Czesław] Kiszczak, who was the Minister of Interior, responsible for the terror of the martial law.

Then we looked for the potential Soviet reaction, looked for the alliances, freedom movements, or people's fronts. The Baltics were the closest allies at the time.

Also, the dissidents in Czechoslovakia, and the Hungarian opposition, too. But, every week we kept the contact, first of all, with Lithuanians.

E.B.: Thank you very much! Hildigund, would you be on the same page as Jerzy here? Obviously, the process in East Germany was a bit different. The summer of 1989 presented a great degree of uncertainty as to where was it going to go. And then in very quick succession the autumn months passed with all the miracles that happened. So, what would you say was the role of the events in the Baltics in all of this that happened from your perspective in Germany in late summer and autumn of 1989?

H.N.: That what started in 1988 and 1989, this democratic awakening, it was Europe-wide movement. I remember that on 18 August I went to Hungary. And for us in East Germany, of course, this Hungarian activity to a great extent had an impact on the developments in East Germany. We saw that Iron Curtain does not work anymore and we understood that people in East Germany cannot be threatened, however, we also watched what happened in Poland. We considered "Solidarity" as something to replicate. For us, Poland was a country where a very strong opposition existed what had managed to establish an opposition movement "Solidarity." It served us as kind of an example. In the Eastern Europe, it all happened to a lesser extent in the GDR. We were still in the process of



awakening. But in the summer of 1989, when we saw this European-scale movement, the events in the Baltics, that encouraged us in East Germany and we saw that the tension is growing in the society. In East Germany, especially young people gathered together, they were more ready to do something and tension was in the air. We saw that a great crisis of communism was happening.

What we saw was that in a totalitarian and communist country of planned economics that basically there is stagnation, everything has stopped. Situation became more tense, crisis deepened, and we got to a deadlock. Gorbachev had the feeling that he was losing control. At the same time, he was looking for new ways to retain the communist regime and system. But the weak points of the system became more and more obvious. And the more we saw these weak points, the more there were people who were ready to act and who actually wanted to implement the political change. This, of course, does not change the role of the head of political movements from the beginning of the 1980s. We saw it as well that they were treated violently in the beginning of the 1980s. And we heard our colleagues who came and said that nothing happens in Germany.

But it was the preparatory phase and then in July 1989 the first demonstrations took place. Before summer holiday, demonstrations were organised in Leipzig. Those were small scale, but we really felt that the system cannot exist anymore and cannot subject people, hold them down.

I had a feeling that there were people who were ready to act, to stand against the weak parts of the system and we also saw "Solidarity" in Poland. In East Germany there were Protestant churches that got involved in peace movement. These churches became more and more popular, and people learned different languages and discussed different topics and looked for ways how to solve the situation, but, of course, we still had totalitarian system, the system of the German Democratic Republic. This meant that everybody was under control, but in churches we felt more or



less free. We could speak in a language that was completely different from the language used by the official communist newspapers, we could say freely what we wanted and churches offered us that space where we could express our opinions. Then we, of course, organised peace prayers, and in the end of the 1980s, we gathered more and more people together.

People were courageous and that encouraged other people to act, too, and they got this courage from the European context, from Hungary and Poland, and, of course, from 23 August 1989, the courage came also from the Baltics. We really understood that something excellent is happening. People in the church in some way contacted organisations in the Baltics and strengthened their ties. There was the Lutheran World Federation had ties with these countries. But, of course, it was difficult, security institutions tried to sabotage these contacts. In the beginning, we had an impulse and then we tried to find ways how to act. And you see that there are military armed forces against us.

But in the Baltics, we saw that two million people participated in a peaceful event, standing against this army. People were standing hand-in-hand, and did it peacefully, without violence. It was nonviolent resistance that we saw there. The Baltic human chain was extremely important signal for us that it was possible to do it in a nonviolent way, that we could defend our ideas and that we did not have to be afraid that we would be attacked. We saw this complex network behind this campaign, and we understood how difficult it must have been to organise something of such a scale, it was a truly inspiring example for us.

It became a huge impulse for us to act. On 9 October 1989, a huge demonstration was organised and the communist regime resigned, they did not have the courage to send army against the demonstration, it had changed and it happened in Leipzig. It happened on 9 October 1989. Then, one month later, the Berlin Wall fell and another month later, on 3 December 1989, in East Germany, two human chains were organised.



From north to south and from south to east, and two million people participated in these chains.

The message was that we want to continue these movements. 9 November 1989 was behind us and we were sure – either we were going towards West Germany or we were staying put. Of course, the Communist Party wanted to go in the opposite direction. In this situation, we organised this human chain in East Germany, too. Replicating that what had happened in the Baltics. Those are the clearest examples, how we used your ideas and implemented them in East Germany. And the way how we organised it, we were spreading handwritten posters via the network of churches. Every Lutheran church asked people to join. We used the network of churches to spread the message and ask people to join us.

People in East Germany joined together and followed your Baltic Way. And we did it in a peaceful way, without violence, exactly as we had seen it in the Eastern Europe.

We excluded communist ideology and we were really there, completely naked, just with our spirits and thoughts against the weapons. Then, in 1990, of course, Gorbachev wanted to keep the Baltics and those were semi-autonomous countries, but it was a temporary approach, however, we saw that he was ready to use force to keep the Baltics, we noticed it. In 1990, we established a committee “Freedom for Baltics!” and it was our solidarity organisation and we had certain ideas and partners in West Berlin asked the Soviet Ambassador to demand the independence of the Baltics. And here I have a little reminder, a small poster that we spread at the time, demanding the freedom of the Baltics.

E.B.: Thank you very much. I think, a lot of people will be interested and will come up to you just see the pictures, they are great. Please use the opportunity over lunch. So, once again, to summarise this. The protest movement, the East German anti-communist movement gained



confidence from the Baltic Way, from the Baltic example. It helped to test the limits of what was possible, which was very, very important at the time. However, Hildigund, let me throw a major historical speculation at you, and I am sorry for that, but I am really interested in your thoughts on this from your personal perspective. Would there be the collapse of the Berlin Wall without the Baltic Way? I know this is hypothetical; we cannot answer these questions with certainty. But what do you think? Was there a very direct link from one event to the other?

H.N.: Yes, certainly, a link existed. The Berlin Wall would not have happened, if resistance movements would not have existed in the Baltics and in other countries. It would not be correct to think that the door to Europe was open. No, it was the other way around, the door to Europe was opened, because you are also part of Europe and those who lived on the other side of the Iron Curtain showed that peaceful demonstration can open this door. Not Europe itself opened the door, but you did it for Europe and invited Europe to return. It was the other way around. In this sense, I really see a direct link between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fact that we saw Iron Curtain falling and how we live in Europe today.

E.B.: Luboš, you are the next. In Czechoslovakia, things also began to move very quickly in the autumn of 1989. After a long period of uncertainty and testing the limits, things really began to move in the other countries as well. Was it just chronological in the case of Czechs or is there a link between these events, too? Can you attest to that as your colleagues did?

L.Š.: The events in Czechoslovakia in the beginning of autumn and in late autumn 1989 were belated and ambiguous, it was sceptically discussed that there was no place for changes. A student demonstration, which was a huge protest movement on 17 November 1989 changed it absolutely.

In the beginning of autumn, the opposition discussed the possibility to take over the power, although it claimed that the opposition was still weak. It was



a paradox. I think, that this period was full of paradox. It is not a coincidence that this period is called the Year of Miracles. Including the first permitted demonstration in Prague in December 1988 on the occasion of the Human Rights Day. Czechoslovakia was influenced basically by the perestroika [перестройка] frame, the Soviet policy, then events and changes in Poland and Hungary. Then rapid internal development, radicalisation after suppression of student demonstration in November 1989.

The events in the Baltics played a certain role and the interpretation and reflection of Baltic events, you can say, was a clash of two worlds – the old world and the new one. The world of communists in a deep crisis divided into conservatives and reform communists. The so called, normalisation regime hardliners were appointed to the office after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, and perestroika deepened the internal problems, because perestroika, liberalisation in the spirit of Prague Spring undermined the existence of their position actually. They did not dare to resist perestroika openly.

They formally joined but limited perestroika to an economic reform. In regard to the events in the Baltics, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia supported the official Soviet view. In 1988, the events in the Baltics were mostly positive as a laboratory of perestroika.

And this perception changed in 1989 and the Baltics became an example of a national conflict in the Soviet Union caused by perestroika. And perestroika was considered a bad concept and bad project for socialism. It is very interesting that in January 1989, communist leadership had a meeting and discussed the reflection of the brutal suppression of demonstration during the so-called [Jan] Palach Week in January 1989. All the Soviet communist press ignored these events, except for the Baltic press, which criticised the brutality of the Czechoslovak police. In the Baltics, the censorship was abolished, but censorship in Czechoslovakia and rigid communist regime lasted until November 1989.



The suppression of demonstrations by police in Prague was monitored and criticised by the Baltic journalists and paradoxically, for the first time, criticism of the brutality of the Czechoslovak undemocratic regime came from the Soviet press.

The second line of perception of the developments in the Baltics was dissent, Czechoslovakian dissent. The dissent also drew attention to the events in the Baltics, mainly information came from the western radio broadcasting, but dissidents had personal communication with some intellectuals. From Estonia, those were Arvo Valton and journalist, Mariannne Mikko, from Lithuania – writer, Almis Gribauskas.

When imprisonment of Vaclav Havel during the Palach Week in January 1989 triggered the world wide wave of solidarity, this extensive campaign became a catalyst of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian interest in the events in Czechoslovakia and the Popular Fronts and unions of writers and artists appealed to the Czechoslovak government to release Vaclav Havel from prison. Immediately after his release, Havel thanked the international solidarity, including the Baltic campaign dedicated to his release. By the way, Havel mentioned it in his interview that in prison he had a copy of “Atmoda.”

E.B.: Was he able to read in Latvian or was it in Russian?

L.Š.: It was a Russian version.

A few days after Vaclav Havel was released from prison, “Charter 77” [“Charta 77”] sent an open request to the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, to view the consequences of Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the promotion of the rights of self-determination of the Baltics. It was the end of May 1989 and “Charter 77” thus became the first Czechoslovak political organisation, which took clear position on the Baltic issue and publicly condemned the annexation of the Baltics and this was base of the policy of Vaclav Havel when he was elected the President of



Czechoslovakia in the end of 1989. He tried to mediate in a quarrel, conflict between Moscow and Vilnius, next year, in the spring of 1990 and he invited to discuss the matter in Prague and he sent invitation to Gorbachev and Landsbergis. Gorbachev did not respond at all, of course. He ignored the invitation. The invitation meant internationalisation.

It seemed cheeky that a former satellite had invited to discuss a matter that was for Gorbachev an internal Soviet matter. Only Landsbergis came to Prague in May 1990. And the result of his visit was a plan of a gradual integration of Lithuania and other Baltic states in the European structures. Not a recognition de jure, which was impossible at the time, but a gradual integration.

E.B.: Luboš, thank you very much for this perspective from Prague on all of this!

We have approximately half an hour left and I have two of our Baltic friends to involve in the conversation. Obviously, their interventions are going to be on what they think is important. However, let me throw a question into all of this and I will do that now because there will not be time to do that later.

We have more or less established that in 1989 events in the Baltics actually, at some points moved quicker than the events in Czechoslovakia, in East Germany, however, not so much Poland, but it was a different case. Giving an example and inspiration for all of that is great. But is that the end of the story? What happened? Lithuanians will have a story about that, and Estonians, too.

What about 1990–1991, when the reformist governments were already established, when the process of reunification of Germany was taking place, when the change was already very solid after 1989? Was there or not a conflict between a bit of realpolitik and solidarity that we have heard here, because Havel, elected in December 1989, had to negotiate the removal of the Soviet troops. Did he want to be very supportive of the



Balts, going all the way? The same thing about [Lech] Wałęsa, right? Also very important discussions took place, very significant national interests at stake. And Kohl's story about the German unification we have heard about, that is a very well-known story. He prioritised sort of relationship with Gorbachev with a preference to keep the Soviet Union together.

So, in 1989, the Baltics as a laboratory of perestroika, showed an example to the Central and Eastern Europeans, but from 1990 to 1991, was not the process becoming more a matter of discussion? A conflict, a little bit of realpolitik. Maybe a lot of conflict of realpolitik and solidarity.

J.M.N.: May I have a very short intervention to follow this in the late 1980s? The famous Polish writer, Tadeusz Konwicki, who, from the 1970s, let's say, desperately subscribed the Polish language journal printed by the Communist Party in Lithuania, told me in December 1988: "I never expected," he said, "that the horrible communist newspaper would be more liberal than the Polish press." This time the Baltic era was the leader.

E.B.: I want to involve Aleksandras and Trivimi. Did the Baltic governments and the Baltic independence movements in 1990 and 1991, at certain point, feel that they were deprioritised, when it came to Poland and East Germany, and German unification and all that process? Can you paint us a little bit of that picture? Maybe later the interplay between the Baltics and the Central and Eastern Europe is not as rosy anymore as in 1989. Aleksandras?

A.A.: Probably not written as Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, but silent agreement between Kohl, [George] Bush Senior and Gorbachev was in place. We think it was. And remembering Kohl and [François] Mitterrand's letter to the Baltic countries, I believe in 1990, and the actual events in the politics, there was a tendency to let Gorbachev deal with the Central and Eastern Europe, former communist Central and Eastern Europe and Baltics should not interfere with that process. It was clear. But, you know,



I am a physicist on my background and I know that the human knowledge is developed mostly asking “like what.” And this year June we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the D-Day. I raised the question for myself – why and what for do we celebrate? “Why” is more or less clear, it was the biggest seaborne military operation and, second, even more important thing it was a united action by the Allies, not only Americans and British, but also French, Polish and there were others. It was not a huge military victory, there were more important battles before and then there was finally a victory in World War Two, but the reason to celebrate was that the D-Day was the breaking point of the World War Two, at least in my opinion and so was the Baltic Way.

I could not say it was the point of no return, but it was clearly the breaking point and colleagues witnessed that it hastened all the processes around the Baltics and Eastern Europe. Despite this realpolitik and the willingness to go step-by-step, probably, I do not believe that political leaders of the time, democratic leaders of the time just wanted to keep the Baltic countries forever in Russia, but my guess was that they wanted just to push it in time a little bit.

In spite of that, I think, it was too late to stop efforts of independence, for example, using military force, like in January 1991, or diplomatic or whatever, so, it was on the way. There is a permanent question “What makes history – obstacles, preferences or individual persons?”

In our case, I believe, it was very important that on 23 August 1989 and on 23 August 1991 we had a clear political leadership. That we had people in our countries that believed, and they wanted to make their efforts in the Baltic Way and afterwards in January 1991 and under the economic blockade of Russia and under economic downturn in 1992. So, there was something that people believed in and in spite of the opinions of Kohl and Mitterrand and Bush, they wanted to go their own way and the Baltic Way was the proof that, “yes, we can do what we want, when we act together”.





That is an important issue. I believe the Baltic Way was the only strong demonstration of acting together. I do not like the word “solidarity”, but it was a joint action to achieve a joint goal. I believe the Baltic Way really helped us to survive those hard times with no external support but with huge pressure from Moscow.

That is the answer to the question what for we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day and the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way. Those are the perfect examples that, yes, we can, when we want and when we act together.

E.B.: Thank you very much, Aleksandras! That was a good concluding point to everything, you should have kept those final sentences to the very end, that was a good one.

Trivimi, I am sorry I have kept you waiting for so long to give you the opportunity to speak and I have introduced many different questions along the way, so probably the speech you prepared at the very beginning is, I do not know, whether it is still relevant. The floor is yours, please.

T.V.: Paldies! Dārgie latviešu draugi! Just before I go to my points, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be here in Riga again, because I consider Riga to be the capital of the Baltics.

Edijs mentioned in the introduction that I also spent some time in the Estonian Parliament and, as a matter of fact, I was a member of the Baltic Assembly. And for most of that time I was head of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly. So, this is how I have visited Riga and Vilnius on many occasions and I happened to be one of the strongest believers in Baltic solidarity and Baltic corporation and I will continue to be so in the future, although I have now retired from politics. But now, I am coming to today’s topic of the Baltic Way.





Just before mentioning my main points, I would like to compliment what my Lithuanian friend said as to some episodes in 1989 and 1988. I recall a very interesting episode in the summer of 1988. In the spring of 1988, the Estonian Heritage Society took the Estonian blue–black–and–white flags into streets in large numbers in Tartu. And that was the first time when Estonian flags stayed in the public space all over Estonia starting in the spring of 1988 and then later on it also spread to Latvia. And then there were a few visitors from Czechoslovakia, from Prague. They were young people from Prague and they were surprised how we could do this thing so freely here in Estonia, as they could not do it in Prague. That was the summer of 1988.

I realised that we were a step ahead of the Central Europe. Then my response to the Czech visitors was that the explanation was very simple: “Because we are closer to Moscow, closer to the Kremlin, that means we are closer to perestroika and so we are implementing perestroika a little quicker than you can do it in Prague.”

But now, I would like to just make my main point about that the Baltic Way. I consider the Baltic Way to be a cherry on the cake. The cake itself, in my opinion, is much more extensive and it was started a long time before. If we go just 10 years further back then it would be 23 August 1979, when the Baltic Appeal was published. It was a very courageous, very bold step, signed by 45 Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians. The text itself was written in my hometown Tartu, but most of the signatures were those of Lithuanians, and then there were also Latvians and Estonians. The most important thing about that Baltic Appeal was that people dared to sign it with their own name and it was addressed to the United Nations and also to the Soviet government and to both governments of Germany.

And I think it was a very important preliminary step just 10 years ahead of the Baltic Way. And then, if we go back in time, all this passive resistance,



listening to the “Voice of America”. Very many old Estonians listened to what our legendary diplomat in the United States, Ernst Jaakson, had to say to us every year on 24 February, which is our national day. He always greeted Estonians as citizens of Estonia. He never regarded us as Soviets, although we had Soviet passports in our pockets. We were always greeted as citizens of the Republic of Estonia, in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s. And so in 1989, the time of the Baltic Way, at least in Estonia, and I remember it very well personally, Estonia was at a crossroads politically, mentally, philosophically. The Popular Front was at its peak, but the official full name of the Popular Front was the “Estonian Popular Front in support of Perestroika.” So, there were many Estonians, who believed that by the way of perestroika and glasnost [гласность] we can achieve more and more freedom, more and more autonomy. This autonomy was even called “sovereignty” in the Estonian language. It was an interesting name for “independence.” It was not independence, it was sovereignty. And so there were many people in Estonia, particularly the leadership of the Popular Front, who believed that in the end, we would have full autonomy, something like Finland had in the czarist Russian empire. And then, if we would have good luck, we could even break away from the Soviet Union and we would be a former breakaway republic of the Soviet Union. This was one way, one option. But there was a growing number of Estonians who remembered what Ambassador Jaakson had to tell us on our national independence day – how can you break away from the Soviet Union if we never entered it?

And there were many Estonians who believed that Estonia was a neighbouring country to the Soviet Union, temporarily occupied by the Soviet Union just like the Kingdom of Denmark was a neighbouring country to Germany. Denmark was never part of Germany; it was temporarily occupied by the Third Reich. So, the only difference they saw was that Denmark was occupied five years, but Estonia was occupied for 50 years. What difference does it make in legal terms? Lauri Mälksoo



today suggested emphasising the principle of legal continuity and the principle of international law. And this, I think, is very important at least for Estonia and, I think, to some extent, also for Latvia that the principle of legal continuity was emphasised and, in the end, the Congress of Estonia was elected and it was a kind of a parallel quasi-parliament. Since March 1990, we had two parliaments in Estonia – the Supreme Soviet, which was created in the Soviet legal system and then there was the Congress of Estonia. In the end, the philosophy of the Congress of Estonia prevailed and when we had our first post-war parliamentary election in 1992, the first constitutional election after World War Two, then, of course, the philosophy of the Congress of Estonia was applied and Estonia regained its independence based on the principle of legal continuity. I think, this is a very crucial point for Estonia and, I think, to some extent, also for Latvia. Lithuania had a little bit different situation and “Sąjūdis” had such a fundamental role in Lithuania that in Lithuania you probably did not need the Estonian way. Thank you!

E.B.: Thank you, Trivimi, for reminding us also that the story as to the complexity and the structure of independence movements in each of the Baltic countries, it is a story in itself. So, all too often probably the view prevails that these are very monolithic, but, particularly in the Estonian case, it is not that simple a story.

Dear friends, we have 8 minutes left and this is tremendously interesting I think for many of us here to discuss these issues, but unfortunately the lunch time approaches and we can continue these discussions informally probably elsewhere, but we need to finish in 7 or 8 minutes. So, what I will give to you, is that a set of last sentences and Aleksandras goes last. Each of you have a minute, it is about four, five, or six sentences. Let me formulate it like this: if you had to send an SMS or a WhatsApp message to your great-grandchildren, as a time capsule from the miraculous year of 1989: What is the most important lesson for the present and for the





future? What needs to be put forward, to be reminded? Maybe an advice to the generations that are active today and probably your generation is sort of stepping down from the active stage, so other generations are taking over. But you saw the lessons of 1989 with your own eyes, you were there. So, if you had to distil, what is the most important message to bring with us from that history?

What would you say? Trivimi?

T.V.: Thank you! The most important message would be cooperation rather than competition. Today, I very often hear, also in the media of my own country that philosophers, economists and journalist argue and discuss whether Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are mostly competitors or they are mostly nations that cooperate. And my message is that we are small enough and our geopolitical location is sensitive enough, so we can certainly be competitors at certain levels, but only at certain levels. Always we should bear in mind cooperation, cooperation above all. Thank you!

J.M.N.: The shortest message is one word – solidarity. Solidarity not as a trade union but solidarity between us. Solidarity as the response to the struggle for the creation of the zone of the limited security, solidarity against the struggle for the division of our region of Europe, of the transatlantic community. When I met Eduard Shevardnadze in 1989, on behalf of Mr Wałęsa, Mr Shevardnadze, who was the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, told me about the dream – Europe from Vladivostok to Lisbon. It means, they said like now, we, Russians, need the zone of the limited security around our borders. As a response is our solidarity and community of values, exactly like in August 1989. Thank you!

H.N.: You asked before what happened in 1990. Of course, Germany's primary interest was to ensure that the German–Soviet troops would be removed from Germany. However, we cannot forget the important principle that we have to accept the lesser evil that is available.



What do I want to say by that? Those who did not have power, obtained it using solidarity and with the help of solidarity they obtained great power. But, if you promise something to somebody, it is important to keep your promise. We thought that we would win the revolution of 1989 and we would keep our promises. In the beginning of the 1980s, we could not have believed in what we achieved in the end of the 1980s, and, of course, to a large extent events developed differently, because we stood hand-in-hand, in 1989, we experienced something unprecedented, and the key message from all that would be that we should never be pessimistic when thinking about politics.

E.B.: That is a difficult advice to follow, particularly these days but we will try. Thank you!

L.Š.: I join to the appeal of solidarity and cooperation and the destabilisation in one state means menace for another state. Solidarity and cooperation are the basis of our Europe. Thank you!

A.A.: Let me upset you. Because everything about solidarity, in fact, was told, but the Baltic countries say that they are a region, because we are neighbours, because we have similar history. But we have similar history with Poland, Estonia with Finland and we with Belorussia and we have very different neighbours, and so on. Lithuania proclaims Poland to be a strategic partner, and so on. We really are different and we really compete.

The question is and I agree with you – in which aspects can we compete? I am a management consultant, so “basic needs” is known phrase for me. And so we have one single basic need – to be secure, military and energetically, and so on, so we can employ that in our relations. And the second issue, in any case, at least economically, the world considers the Baltic countries as a single region.

The tourists from China go to all three countries; the packaging is for all three countries. The question is – should we resist to that to be different



or should we explore it to be more competitive not with each other but against the world, against Germany and the USA and China? And let's see the example of the Scandinavian countries. Retailers compete in front for customers, but they cooperate in the backyard for suppliers. In fact, this way of cooperation, recognising that we should compete, but that we should cooperate as well to be stronger, not only in regard to security issues, but also on economic issues, should prevail. And now, let me repeat again what I said.

E.B.: Please do, we need an inspirational quote.

A.A.: Remember the Baltic Way as the demonstration of the fact that, yes, we can, when we act together. Thank you!

E.B.: Thank you very much! Trivimi Velliste, Hildigund Neubert, Luboš Švec, Aleksandras Abišala, Jerzy Marek Nowakowski, thank you very much! Another round of applause is due now!



**EUROPE AFTER
THE BALTIC WAY.
CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES OF THE
21ST CENTURY'S
DEMOCRACY**



Carl Bildt,

former Prime Minister of Sweden

Mr President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen! It is indeed a great honour to be invited to Riga and to be invited to speak on occasion like this, when we are remembering both – the tragedies of the past and the successes, that have been there in the past decades, as well as looking forward or trying to look forward to the challenges that we are facing in the decades ahead.

1939. The shameful secret pact eight decades ago was a pact between the totalitarian rulers of those days. It was a short-term success for both of them, for Hitler and for Stalin, but ultimately, as we know, lead to tragedies beyond belief. Millions and millions of people across this continent lost their lives. Nations were enslaved, and nations and peoples were deprived of their freedom.

But then, three decades ago, everything started to move again. And the months of the second half of 1989 was truly a miraculous period for all Europe. The semi-free elections in Poland with an overwhelming victory for “Solidarność” and opposition forces.

The dismantling of the Iron Curtain between Hungary and Austria, as it was celebrated in the beginning of this week. Ultimately, the fall of the shameful wall in Berlin that had divided not only the city and the country, but the continent and, to certain extent, entire world.

But what happened here in the Baltics, Soviet republics in those days – states today – truly deserves a special place in that miraculously important part of the European history. Because here it was not just a question of the crumbling of the outer Soviet Empire. I think it was understanding in the deeper circles in Moscow in those days that the



outer Soviet Empire was a more temporary phenomenon, which at some point in time would have to go.

Here it was a question of the crumbling of the Soviet Union itself and that made it substantially different. Latvia, as well Estonia and Lithuania were made part of the Soviet Union through occupation and annexation. This was possible by Stalin's and Hitler's shameful pact.

But now, in those months, the shameful truth of that pact started to be revealed and recognised in the Soviet Union itself. And the peoples of all three countries asked for the right to determine the future for themselves that they had been denied. The Baltic Way three decades ago brought this fundamental issue to the attention of the world, up to two million people hand in hand across three nations nearly 600 kilometres.

It was unique. It was peaceful. It was powerful.

It is rightly remembered as one of the key events that led to the restoration of the independence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and thus the equation of the Europe that we live in today.

And it was important in bringing the attention of the world to what was happening here, because in those miraculous months, different nations had different perspectives.

It was natural that one in Germany was focused on primarily what was happening immediately on the other side of the Iron Curtain – in DDR, perhaps in Poland, perhaps in Hungary. It was not unnatural that the Americans were primarily concerned with what was happening in Moscow, and the future of the control of an enormous amount of nuclear weapons built by the evil empire of the Soviet Union.

But the Baltic Way brought the voice and the peaceful power of the three Baltic nations to the attention of the world in a way which could scarcely have been done in any other way.



We all know the important developments that have occurred during the three decades that have passed since then. They were able to bring three nations together, to integrate fully with all the institutions of the European and the Atlantic World, in a way, which, I believe, was beyond even the wildest dreams of all those millions that joined hands on that day.

The European Union, NATO, common currency – to just mention these three. It has been a quarter of a century of remarkable success for Europe. As integration has moved forward and as more and more nations have been able to become part of the process and profit from all what integration, from all what cooperation actually brings. And it has gone hand-in-hand with, during that quarter of a century, the advance of freedom and democracy across very wide parts of our world. It was an age of optimism, of democracy, of greater international cooperation.

But today, as we all know and feel and discuss, the mood is to certain extent beginning to change. There is a distinct creeping feeling that darker clouds are perhaps gathering on the horizon. That a new age of brutal rulers and brutal games of power is coming. That the freedoms that we cherish might be under threat again.

There is no denying that the signs of a new age of disorder are certainly there, as we look across the global scene.

We see, particularly during the last decade, revisionist Russia. We see an assertive China. We see disruptive United States. And we see Europe with the new divisions and sometimes a new disarray. We have seen war returning to the east of our Europe, as Russia sought to divide and subdue Georgia, but primarily Ukraine. We have seen the two great Anglo-Saxon powers that were so immensely important during most of what we call the post-war period, retreat from European





and global responsibility. We see the nasty politics of identity trying to put man against man, and nation against nation. We even hear voices inside our own Union saying that the age of what is called liberal democracy has arrived.

And nothing of this should be taken lightly. We are indeed talking about trends, however powerful we judge them to be, that could take us back to darker, difficult and more dangerous times. But neither, as we look at this, should we forget – the other forces that we are also witness to and that connect with that powerful spirit that was expressed during those miraculous months and in the Baltic Way three decades ago.

When young people, on Saturday after Saturday, take a very simple and not particularly revolutionary demand that everybody should be able to field candidates for the local elections and have to face police brutalities on the streets of Moscow, it is a sign of something important that is actually starting to change.

And when we see that, in geographical terms far-away Hong Kong, but, in this information society age fairly nearby Hong Kong, millions of people mobilise to defend the core principles of the rule of the law, it is also a sign of sentiments that no ruler, however powerful or however brutal, can forever totally ignore.

I am not saying, to be certain, that the powerful machines of today's Russia or today's China are about to fall. Far from it. I still believe they have resilience and strength for some time to come.

But I am saying that it should be clear that they are not the future in a way they would like to portray things to be. The tide of history, the slow, sometimes uncertain, but storm tide of history, I firmly believe, remains with the forces of freedom. And, if there is one message from the streets of Moscow and the streets from the Hong Kong, then that is it.





But this does not mean that things will be easy in the years to come. History, as someone pointed out in the previous panel, history moves in waves and in circles, seldom, unfortunately, in entirely straight lines.

A lot of things show that more demanding years are ahead of us, as strong regimes try to demonstrate their strength, as liberal values and principles come under attack and as nations and cultures and individuals are sometimes put against each other.

We should not be naive. There are those actively trying to weaken the fabric of solidarity of our societies and the strength, confidence and credibility of our institutions in order to make it possible to bring us under their powers, breaking up the European Union, questioning the very essence of the Atlantic Alliance, inciting hatred against people of other nationalities and beliefs, undermining the principles and institutions of our liberal order.

The success of the Baltic Way and everything else that happened during those miraculous months was the success of the belief to the core principles of freedom and democracy. It was not the power of the three Baltic nations that decided the outcome. In classical power terms, you had virtually no power whatsoever. But you had the power of ideas, the power of principles and the power of convictions and that proved stronger than the disappearing divisions.

Let us not forget that this was a time when those ideas and those principles stood strong also among many in Russia. Ultimately, it was their freely elected representatives, representatives from all over the, then, Soviet Union that denounced the shameful pact between Hitler and Stalin and thus paved the way for your countries being able to re-establish your independence with legitimacy before the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union. The importance of this is great; it was not perhaps fully appreciated at the time, but has become even more important as time



has passed. And, I think, to underline the point that Trivimi Velliste made, it is important to recognise that, yes, the Baltic development was ahead of Central Europe. And why was that the case? Was it ahead of Central Europe because it was closer to Moscow? And the centre, as a matter of fact, of the democratic revolution that brought down the Soviet Union was in Russia itself. That paved the way for you to re-establish your independence and paved the way for the nations of the Central Europe, what was the phrase of those days: to return to Europe.

As we look forward, in these more difficult times, I believe that the unity in creation of the European Union will be of increasing importance. It certainly applies to all of the issues related to the prosperity of our economies and our societies, free and open markets, free trade in an open world, free enterprise bringing prosperity for the future, but increasingly it applies also to our security. In purely military terms, we need our own military resources, as well as the military resources of our allies.

In the case of Latvia, the Canadian led NATO battle group is far more than just a symbol of the solidarity. Security in this age is a much broader concept. We see the risks of our society being torn apart by the politics of division. We see the risk of our political cooperation being weakened and disrupted by the forces of nationalism. We face the challenges of security in the new age of profound digital dependents. We must recognise that a fractured Europe will not only be a weaker Europe, but, in the end of the day, also a more dangerous Europe. And the first that risk feeling the effects of this, will be the smallest of us, because that is their unfortunate law and lesson of history.

Those momentous days three decades ago, then our focus was almost solely on the issues of Europe. Rightly, so! It was the future of our continent that was at the stake at that time. Europe was reborn after the long decades of horrors of war, oppression and division. But today, I believe we all recognise that our focus has to be wider. Globalisation,



trade flows, financial flows, information flows, digital flows, migration flows, our borders are closer to the rest of the world. And the rest of the world is closer to us in virtually every aspect. If there is a trade war between China and the United States, we would be directly affected. If there is a meltdown in the Middle East, it will concern us as well.

If there is a breakdown of order stability in the digital sphere, our societies certainly will not be immune to the effects of that. That is why our nations, the democracies of Europe must work more closely together in the years to come. In the new age of disorder, our strength and our security rests primarily in our ability to work together, to handle the unknown that is just beyond the horizon. The known challenges, I think, we have already learned to handle. The unknown is still ahead of us and that we can only handle by working together.

The Baltic Way was unique in very many ways. We should not forget, how it brought together Estonia Latvia and Lithuania. That was not something that I could take for granted in those days. And I think that part of the message was also very powerful.

It was not just one nation seeking its future and freedom. Those were nations joining hands and seeking the future together and that made the message of the Baltic Way more powerful than the message of “Estonian Way”, “Latvian Way” or “Lithuanian Way” would have been.

We should not forget, as I noted already, that the outside world listened to the democrats of Russia and it brought the situation of your countries to the attention of entire world, although most of them, as I said, had been focusing, rightly from their point of view, on other issues. And suddenly these three small nations emerged on their consciousness as well. It demonstrated that the power of ideas and values and commitment is really there. It showed the value of working together, of standing hand-in-hand in defence of those ideas and principles.





And this, I think, is the very powerful and very important message that we should carry forward from those days three decades ago into this emerging new age of disorder. Standing firm for ideas and principles and standing hand-in-hand together as Baltic and Nordic people, as Europeans, as committed democrats to face and to shape our common future. That was then, during and still is an extremely important lesson of the Baltic Way. Thank you!



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1. Address of the Director of the National Library of Latvia (NLL), **Andris Vilks**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
2. Address of the President of the Republic of Latvia, **Egils Levits**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
3. Address of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, **Edgars Rinkēvičs**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
4. Video address of Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, **Dr. Angela Merkel**. Photographer Kārlis Kalseris, NHML.
5. Address of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, **Nauris Puntulis**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
6. Address of the First Chairman of the Latvian Popular Front, **Dainis Īvāns**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
7. Address of the Professor of the University of Tarty, **Dr. Lauri Mälksoo**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
8. Address of the journalist journalist for the newspaper “Welt/Welt am Sonntag”, **Dr. Richard Herzinger**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
9. **Panel discussion** “Nationally Democratic Revolutions in the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe.” From left: **Dr. Edijs Bošs**, journalist, **Dr. Luboš Švec**, Professor of University of Charles in Prague, **Aleksandras Abišala**, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, **Hildigund Neubert**, Board Member of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, former member of the opposition movement of the German Democratic Republic, **Jerzy Marek Nowakowski**, former Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Latvia, **Trivimi Velliste**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.



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11. Address of the former Prime Minister of Sweden, **Carl Bildt**. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
12. **Panel discussion** “Involvement: Democracy of People or Democracy of Crowd. Future of Liberal Democracy.” From left: **Dr. Arnis Rītups**, editor of magazine “Rīgas Laiks”, **Dāvis Sīmanis**, film director, **Pauls Raudseps**, commentator of magazine “lr”, **Egils Levits**, President of Latvia, **Sandra Kalniete**, Member of the European Parliament, **Dr. Una Bergmane**, Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics, **Dr. Dace Dzenovska**, Professor of the Oxford University. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
13. **Panel discussion** “Involvement: Democracy of People or Democracy of Crowd. Future of Liberal Democracy.” From left: **Dr. Arnis Rītups**, editor of magazine “Rīgas Laiks”, **Dāvis Sīmanis**, film director, **Pauls Raudseps**, commentator of magazine “lr”, **Egils Levits**, President of Latvia, **Sandra Kalniete**, Member of the European Parliament, **Dr. Una Bergmane**, Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics, **Dr. Dace Dzenovska**, Professor of the Oxford University. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.





14. Participants of the conference. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.
15. Organisers and lecturers of the conference. Second row from left: **Dr. Edijs Bošs**, journalist, **Dr. Lauri Mälksoo**, Professor of the University of Tartu, **Aleksandras Abišala**, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, **Dr. Richard Herzinger**, journalist for the newspaper “Welt/Welt am Sonntag”, **Andris Vilks**, Director of the National Library of Latvia, **Dr. Luboš Švec**, Professor of University of Charles in Prague, **Dainis Īvāns**, the First Chairman of the Latvian Popular Front, **Trivimi Velliste**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, **Jerzy Marek Nowakowski**, former Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Latvia, **Anna Zeibārte**, Head of the Popular Front Museum of the National History Museum of Latvia, **Dr. Una Bergmane**, Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics, **Līga Gaisa**, Project Manager of Latvia’s Centenary Office, **Daiga Krieva**, Researcher of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Latvia office, **Anna Muhka**, Head of Corporate Communications of the National Library of Latvia, **Una Spēlmane-Baumane**, Head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Latvia office, **Sarmīte Ēlerte**, former Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, **Nauris Puntulis**, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, **Egils Levits**, President of Latvia, **Carl Bildt**, former Prime Minister of Sweden, **Hildigund Neubert**, Board Member of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, former member of the opposition movement of the German Democratic Republic, **Elisabeth Bauer**, Director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation office for the Baltic countries, **Sandra Kalniete**, Member of the European Parliament, **Dr. Dace Dzenovska**, Professor of the University of Oxford. Photographer Kristians Luhaers, NLL.



INVOLVEMENT: DEMOCRACY OF PEOPLE OR DEMOCRACY OF CROWD. FUTURE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Democracy in the digital age. Liberation movements of the 1980s in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, Central and Eastern Europe, and today's forms of public involvement. Achieved and lost, different and similar, populism, fake news and manipulations. Stability and possible changes of representative democracy, forms of public involvement, and democracy institutions.



Egils Levits,

President of Latvia

Sandra Kalniete,

Deputy of the European Parliament

Dr. Una Bergmane,

Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics

Dr. Dace Dzenovska,

Professor of the Oxford University

Pauls Raudseps,

commentator of magazine "Ir"

Dāvis Sīmanis,

film director

Moderator: **Dr. Arnis Rītups,** editor of magazine "Rīgas Laiks"

Arnis Rītups: First, I would like to invite Egils Levits, President of Latvia. Sandra Kalniete, Member of the European Parliament. And then we have two people with "Dr." in front of their names. Una Bergmane, Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics. And Dr. Dace Dzenovska, Professor of the Oxford University. And then without titles, we have two more people: Pauls Raudseps, commentator of magazine "Ir", and Dāvis Sīmanis, film director. It would be lovely! I would like to narrow down the topic of our discussion out of this long list I just read out. I would be delighted, if we could focus on the diagnosis of liberal democracy and on prognosis of its next phases, regardless whether its outcome is lethal or not. And I propose to do it, to a great extent,



because one of the organisers of this event, when I asked what would be the goal of this discussion, answered that the goal is to try to understand what to do in a situation when democracy becomes more and more stupid and as a result it threatens us all. This is one point of reference, and the other that I would like to discuss, referring to the words by Mr Carl Bildt, that there are dark clouds at the horizon. Scary shadows of conflicts and isolationism in different configurations. Due to these two reasons I would like to ask you to speak. I will ask each of you to say some introductory words, but I would like to ask you to focus on how you see the position of liberal democracy in the world, its diagnosis and possible prognosis how it might develop. Let's start with the President of the Republic of Latvia, Egils Levits.

E.L.: Thank you! So, I would like to start with some words about the diagnosis of democracy, as you said, and then I will mention possible solutions. First, about diagnosis. I see that democracy, first and foremost, is inseparable from the state. Democracy can exist only in a state, as it has to be clear who makes decisions and to whom these decisions apply, therefore, a state is necessary for a democracy to function. There are some models, the so called democracy that is beyond the state, it is not, however, a classic democracy – one person, one vote. Therefore, democracy requires state. I see three trends in this context. Globalisation, internationalisation and Europeanisation are the first trends that reduce the power of a state partially, therefore more and more questions arise that a state cannot solve itself and several states or entire world has to get involved together, for example, environment protection or climate change, therefore, in this context, the role of a state decreases. Possibly, we might say that there are other matters that are solved by the state.





At any rate, state is not the only player, but it remains the key player, however, I am not sure whether after 50 years the state will still be the key player. Now, we have it, and for next 49 years as well, but after 50 years – I am not sure anymore. Globalisation, internationalisation, and Europeanisation reduces state's, let's say, operating radius, because more and more questions arise above and outside the state. Another trend is the complexity of society that increases continuously. I would even say in geometric progression. Therefore, it means that to take a decision, the consequences and especially side effects become more and more unpredictable. The parliament stays the same, the capacity of people stays the same, of course, there are experts who express their opinions, but various, rational, justified opinions are expressed about each matter, and it becomes more and more difficult to take a decision in an unpredictable and complicated situation. There are simple decisions that are not complicated. I will now take a glass of water, pour in water and drink – it is a simple decision. However, the matter which energy resources we should finance or support more than others now, of course, we can discuss about it conference and conference, but we have to make that decision no. The situation becomes more complicated. This is the second trend. The third trend is that more and more people get involved in democracy and decision-making. In decision-making or at least participation in decision-making, especially in regard to development of technologies, it is easier. Simply by pushing buttons "yes" or "no" and people do it directly or indirectly. Decision-making can be not, let's say, formal but informal way, shaping the public opinion and participating in shaping the public opinion. Therefore, the majority of people increases who are formally equal always. In the past, it was different, smaller part of people was interested in political matters and did not participate in



shaping the public opinion. Last 10 or 15 years we can see it changing intensely. This is the second trend. So, there are three objective trends: globalisation, complexity, significantly increased democratic participation. What does it mean? Especially in regard to democratic participation. Let's say, one state takes a lot of, thousands of decisions every day, tens of thousands of decisions every day. Participation of people in taking decisions, although a person wants to get involved more, it reduces the ability to go into details of the decisions and take rational decisions. Therefore, we might say that rationality of decisions in relation to increased democratic participation is one of the matters that might be risky and that we should discuss. Another matter in regard to the increased democratic participation is that we can see that modern technologies with the so called political technologies have caused a situation when the public opinion and consequently decision-making can be directed purposefully and secretly and manipulate with it. So, there are to trends or two issues. One is that people get more and more involved indirectly or directly in the decision-making, therefore, they have less time to think about their position in regard to these decisions. This is one trend. Another is that in such a superficial decision-making process, the public opinion can be rather easily manipulated. There could be two development trends. I see that one trend is that democracy develops in the direction of populism. Populism is one what how to deal with the situation that people want to get more and more involved in decision-making and populism offers silly but rather simple solutions.

Of course, the senselessness of these solutions can be detected only if you would dedicate half an hour or an hour or let's say 10 minutes to a matter, but, if you would be offered (this is not available now) to decide



30 different matters and you would just have to reply “yes”, “no”, “yes”, “no”, in this case, the level of rationality, of course, would not be too high. And populism offers us such participation with reduced rationality, if I may say it as a politologist, not as a president. As a president I should say: “It is very good that there is participation.” As a politologist, I see certain risks.

A.R.: Do I understand it correctly – low rationality is approximately the same that I quoted before: “In stupid democracy, it is possible to become...”?

E.L.: Very close, very close.

E.L.: But not entirely the same.

A.R.: I just wanted to clarify it.

E.L.: There is another chance. The institutional system of democracy has developed theoretically from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and it has remained rather unchanged. Possibly, to solve the parallel issues of rationality and complexity that I mentioned earlier... The issues are not the same. Possibly we might think of institutional further development of democracy, decision-making and decision-making system could be differentiated in two large directions. Namely, the decisions on values and rational or, let’s say, special decisions. In regard to the matters related to values, I would like to say as follows. If we talk about values, all the people are the same and equal, as there is no values that are more special than others. We cannot say that my values are better than yours. We are in this case equivalent and every person’s position in the matters of values has to be considered. In these matters that are related to values, everybody should be able to participate and they can every day take many



and different value decisions. The decisions that require in-depth consideration and understanding of their complexity, balancing and similar things, it would most likely be better if the state would take these decisions. We all want rational decisions. We all as a society would like that the state takes a rational decision.

A.R.: Where does this assumption come from that everybody might want rational decisions?

E.L.: I think people understand that... I wanted to say that these decisions should be taken by state institutions that can delve into the matters and see them on broader scale and can process them better. Why do I use this assumption? Because I think that it is the matter of common value. If we would ask the society: "Would you like the state to operate rationally or irrationally?" I would say that 99.99% of people would reply: "Rationally." That would be like election result in the Soviet Union. This would be a brief insight into the objective trends: globalisation, increased complexity and increased participation of people. Where do the issues lie? The issues are related to rationality and manipulation. Manipulation of public opinion. There are two development directions, and depending on where politics would be directed, it is difficult to say. The direction of populism or the direction of rationalism, it means that the decisions on values would be separated from rational decisions. And, for example, in regard to the decisions on values, I think, it would be easy and it would be sensible, to use the classic democracy mechanisms, for example, referendum and survey. It would be certainly suitable for taking decisions on values. If we talk about democracy in general, I think, let's say, looking at referenda in Latvia (we have had less) or other countries, possibly part of those



decisions taken at referenda essentially are not suitable to be taken at referenda. However, part of those decisions that are taken without any referendum, should be submitted for referenda. So, I have finished.

A.R.: Wonderful! I did not dare to interrupt you as the President of the Republic of Latvia and remind you that each speaker has three to five minutes.

A.R.: But you as a politologist, I would suggest...

E.L.: As a politologist, you can interrupt me all the time.

A.R.: I will do that. I do not dare to make a sound towards you as the President of the Republic of Latvia, but I will make some sounds towards you as a politologist.

Sandra Kalniete, please!

Sandra Kalniete: Yes, thank you! Of course, I it rather difficult to continue after the President and his general overview that he constructed. I will try to narrow down the broad set of theses that I had prepared. I think we agree that liberal democracy is in the process of change along with our society, our economics and technologies that also change significantly. And just like we change, democracy and its expression will change. I think the current biggest challenge of politics and political systems, in the time of change, is: how to retain the institutional basis on which our societies are based and not to let panic take over that is caused by the right and left radicalism in politics. According to statistical data, the amount of radically-inclined voters is rather constant, from 20% to 25%, and it has not been more anywhere until now. Another aspect I consider important is that this crisis of liberal democracy is not local or



regional, it is global. It includes such large countries as the USA, and such international union of countries as the European Union. And this is also related to the accelerated globalisation conditions in which we are now, compared with the previous century. Of course, globalisation poses certain needs for the countries and societies that we cannot avoid. Integration is one of those. Mutual contacts are developing and growing. At the same time, we, of course, choose to retain democracy, and the question that becomes more and more topical is the question about sovereignty and how to retain it.

A.R.: How, in your opinion, can we retain the necessity for democracy, what processes do you describe like this?

S.K.: I just wanted to explain you that. I do not know if I can say that, but you should tell me then. There are three categories: integration, sovereignty and democracy. If we see the situation in today's politics, we can see it is difficult to join all three of them. If there is integration and sovereignty, democracy suffers to a certain extent. If we choose sovereignty and democracy, the questions of protectionism become topical and the ways how to protect from integration. The European Union, until now, has chosen integration and democracy, this means that Member States have to voluntarily reduce their sovereign decision-making rights and in practice it might mean, and this is a widely discussed matter, that from unanimous vote should be replaced by a qualified majority in all spheres. You have to tell me, whether I still have time, but I would like to touch two very significant points. I would like to talk about why exactly this is the time of doubting liberally democratic values, because the end of World War Two started a certain victory march of the liberal democracy. Unrest of 1968 supplemented it with a significant emphasis on the rights of



minorities and different groups of minorities. And 1989, when the reunification of Europe started, there was no other slogan but only “we want to live normally and be free.” During the first decade when we have been integrating in the European Union, we accepted the liberally democratic values that had shaped without us. It seemed correct, but last decade these values have been doubted and it might be due to several reasons, but I will talk about only two, because now, along with the classic democracy, a hybrid is developing. Others call it the controlled democracy, others say it is elected authoritarian regime, however, this elected authoritarian regime, especially in the case of China, shows that welfare can be achieved with the strong fist, by that meaning dictatorship. This causes that the Central and Eastern Europe societies have a temptation to go back to certain well-known elements that put larger control over democracy and even interfere with the rule of law. I would like to emphasise here one region: the Baltics. I personally think that liberal democracy will not suffer in the Baltics. It is because our geopolitical position does not allow us to experiment with risky right-wing and left-wing radicals and populism, because our need for security and wish to be there where decisions are made that refer to us rather without us but with us, gives us a certain rational understanding that we can also see in our election. We feel that but there is one weakening factor that has a great impact on liberal democracy and it is migration. By “migration” I hereby do not mean only migration into the European Union, but I mean migration within the European Union, from less developed regions to developed regions, because since World War Two, migration has never been so intensive as in the past decade. Who leaves Eastern Europe? This is the last one, I understand that I have to stop. The most educated ones. Those who were on the front lines of liberal revolution. Today, regardless of whom, [Ivan]



Krastev or anybody else, they all work in the West. This, of course, causes a large gap and a certain demographic panic that I personally feel in Latvia. And this demographic panic causes a necessity to construct a virtual wall. To protect that what is ours, our identity, we do not want the strangers. It is paradoxical that we are do against migration from outside, but it is absolutely hypothetical, because no waves of migration are present, but those are fears, fears of depopulation. And the last one – those are large intellectual resources that have flown away from our countries to the prosperous Europe, almost nobody talks about this, about our investments.

A.R.: Thank you, Ms Kalniete! We will now turn to two such resources who have left this country and feed the young British generation with their intellect.

Let's start with Una Bergmane!

Una Bergmane: Actually, I am a historian, therefore, I would have better liked to talk at the panel about history, but, if I am asked to talk about nowadays and future, I would like to point out one specific topic: how political changes in the USA might impact the quality of democracy in Latvia? And why will I speak about the USA? We might say that Latvia is in direct contact with [Vladimir] Putin's regime in Russia, where the issues of democracy are more serious than in the USA. And why will I not talk about Russia's impact on democracy in Latvia? Because, in my opinion, the developments in Russia has a totally different impact on the situation in Latvia. Russia, in the consciousness of majority of Latvian population, is something different. It is something in regard to which we shape our identity. Meanwhile, the USA are an ally that has a large normative impact on the developments in Latvia. Latvia, of course, is not only a Member State of the NATO but also of the European Union, but, I am afraid, that no



other European country has such an impact on Latvia as the USA. It is simply because no European country can or want to undertake the role of the main security guarantor of Latvia and the Baltics. And this is because I will speak about the USA. After the collapse of the USSR, 12 states were formed and three restored their independence. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are the only ones of these 15 states where the transition to democracy was without significant complications. The role of international community was huge in this process. Our wish to join the European Union and NATO gave the international community a large normative impact on the reforming processes in Latvia. And the USA play a special role in this situation.

This special role was determined by the special relations between the Baltics and the USA. In the 1990s, the USA became, as I said, the main security guarantor for the Baltics. But, on the other hand, this special role was determined by the special place the USA take in the system of international relations. The USA is not only a military superpower, but also a structural superpower. What does structural power mean in the international relations? This structural power is the ability to decide how things are done.

It is the ability to create normative frame. Normative frame that afterwards regulates the transnational relations which further regulate the relations between states and their citizens and states and companies. In other words, it is a chance to set the rules. Compliance with democratic norms until now has been one of the pre-conditions for us to play in the team of the USA in the game of international relations. That is the reason why the transition to democracy for the Baltics was fast and successful. Partially and to a great extent because our main



security guarantor demanded, supported and facilitated it. Since 2014 and election of Donald Trump, things have changed. This President of the USA is not interested in democratic missionarism and he does not use democratisation rhetoric as an instrument to facilitate the impact of the USA. Moreover, he himself in his internal and foreign policy destroys normative frames that have regulated transnational relations, as well as normative frames that have regulated the relations between executive power and media, opposition and courts. The recent case when Trump wanted to buy Greenland. It is not just a funny incident. It is a typical example of destroying this normative frame. It takes us back to time when the rule over territory belonged not to democratic institutions, in this case the Parliament of Greenland, but the colonial superpowers that could trade territories and their inhabitants, in this case Inuits and other Greenlanders. However, instead of the destroyed frames, new behaviour models were created and methods were normalised which were considered as incompatible with democratic society. An example of this might be again rhetoric of the President Trump in regard to journalists. How these changes in the USA would impact democracy in Latvia which is still, according to our own will and hopefully will remain in the sphere of impact of the USA, because, as I mentioned earlier, there is no other country that would like, could or be able to take the role of the main security guarantor of Latvia and the Baltics. Will Latvia continue progressing in the human rights matters without the next stimulus from the USA? An example might be the situation of the LGBTQ community in Latvia. The USA Embassy has actively expressed its support for this community for years. But, thus year, as we got to know, during the pride month, instructions were received from Washington not to hoist up the LGBTQ community flag at



the Embassy. Will these new behavioural models that are normalised in the USA now become a larger normative frame that would impact the understanding of the Latvian community as to what politicians can and cannot do. These are the matters that seemed important for me within the framework of this topic.

Thank you!

A.R.: We have some more speakers, let's continue with the intellectual resource that has left Latvia. Dace Dzenovska, please!

Dace Dzenovska: When I am not a resource, I am a social anthropologist and I will try to reflect from this perspective about liberal democracy today. Continuing what Mr President started, i.e. that democracy needs a state, I would like to add that liberal democracy and, especially within a national state, of course, needs a nation, but even more it needs a crowd. The same crowd that sometimes can also seem stupid. For example, during the Baltic Way and later during the Barricades, the nation was an emotionally thrilled crowd that legitimised the Latvian state to be restored.

It was a cosmic power that had to take children, passers-by and Russians with it. Their involvement was absolutely necessary. But at the same time when this thrilled crowd legitimised the state, it caused risk for the national frame and liberally democratic system of this state. Consequently, soon after that, the crowd was gradually separated from the nation as a political community that participates in the state administration and, of course, one of the first steps was exclusion of those who migrated during the Soviet times from the political community as the community of citizens. Many of whom participated at the Barricades and most likely also at the Baltic Way. This example is not



specific only for Latvia, it is not some kind of negligence of Latvia or something like that. This, in fact, characterises a tension characteristic for a liberal democracy. A tension between liberalism and dislike for a nation that can at any moment become a crowd, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other hand which is a demand to legitimise political system and it is not something new, it is a compromise in liberal democracy between liberalism and democracy that was created in the end of the 19th century, when, we even might say as a result of populism, because the demand to democratise liberalism, for example, by expanding the political community and including workers and women came from below. And expansion of this political community, in fact, was carried out along with implementation of mechanism of protection of minority opinions, as an attempt to protect liberalism from the power of crowd. In the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century, the attempts of liberalism to protect itself from the power of crowd looked differently. It is not the same as in the end of the 19th century. Protected minorities are defined on the basis of categories. Liberalism has undertaken protection of ethnic, religious, sexual minorities, and liberalism is ready to restrict the variety of opinions to ensure protection. The crowd that threatens the rights of minorities threatens liberalism. It is characterised as nationalistic, racist, intolerant and, as we know, in the USA and United Kingdom, it is largely discussed whether the supporters of Brexit and Trump are a crowd that is racist and is against migration, for example, or it is shown like that by the liberal elites that want to retain their position as well as to turn away the attention from the consequences of neo-liberalism. And I think we should also talk about economic liberalism. In Latvia, the situation is different. That what, from the point of view of liberalism, is a crowd, often is





a nation, from the point of view of national state. How does Latvia deal with this problem? Geopolitics is the basis of nationally liberal democracy in Latvia. Geopolitics helps to partially prevent internal conflicts and the situation in Latvia, which might seem paradoxical from the perspective of western liberalism, however, it is totally rational from the perspective of Latvia's geopolitical interests; for example, Latvian liberals can be nationalistic towards Russians who behave or think so differently that they pose threats to national state, but at the same time Latvian liberals do not lose their liberal accreditation and criticises the nation, for example, for their intolerance towards other minorities, for example, LGBTQ or others. The Latvian nationalists can be intolerant against all minorities, however, they do not lose their liberal accreditation, because they participate in retaining the international liberal order or, let's say, in protecting the state against the threats of Russia. Another mechanism that has been mentioned before for prevention of internal contradictions, of course, is migration: part of the crowd that might mobilise around social matters is not in the country and, of course, not only the leading minds of independence movement leave the country but also the crowd. And in these conditions, from the perspective of national state and liberally democratic system, the external powers, Russian propaganda, and its attempts to reform the nation into the crowd represent the threats of populism. Therefore, we might say that in Latvia, liberal democracy within national frame solves its contradictions transferring those to external threats or, with the help of migration. And using the Latvian example, but not only, this is a historically specific, but not a unique example, we might say that the future of liberal democracy depends on its ability to prevent internal contradictions either by becoming democratic again or finding new opportunities to externalise threats.



A.R.: Wonderful! Thank you! Human resources travel to the opposite direction as well, and Pauls has come back here for a while. Pauls Raudseps, pleas.

Pauls Raudseps: Yes, thank you! So we are talking about democracy as a clear benefit. But, I think, it is important that we remember that over the course of history of Western civilisation, since Greeks tried to understand what society was and how it functions the best, democracy was considered a dangerous and unstable system that should be avoided. Aristotle had observed that in the Greek poleis, democracy usually led to the situation that demagogues turned into dictators. Plato, in his turn, wrote his most famous work “Republic” for a reason, to a certain extent to justify why democracy is dangerous. Because democracy misrepresents the truth, allowing everybody to perform and say anything and in this way to convince the crowd and nation, regardless of how we call it, and because of that he expressed an opinion that state should be governed by a philosopher–king who knows the truth and, based on that, he is able to act properly and to ensure the existence of this polis. And later, for hundreds and thousands of years, attempts to implement democracy that were mainly carried out in small political units soon led to demagogues taking the power. This situation changed significantly, as Mr President mentioned, in the end of the 18th century, when it was understood that the way how to solve it had been implemented. We have touched it, in my opinion, it is important to understand it, representative democracy – the fact that we as a political community entrust decision–making to our representatives who, as experts, try to deal with these complex decisions, to balance different interests, this has given institutional frame and stability to this mass of people that was otherwise





subjected to different and sudden emotional changes and fluctuations that could soon, first mean that contradicting decisions would be taken, all power would be entrusted to one demagogue or leader, and other things that essentially destroyed the possibility of this system to exist. What we see today, and now I, as a media representative, would like to turn to this question of the truth and democracy. Plato already saw the connection between these two matters, and we see today that, thanks to two processes, this ability to create a structured frame for national participation in decision-making is reduced significantly. One thing, and that is more long-term phenomenon, is unfortunately reduced trust in the elected representatives. There are different reasons for that: professionalization of politician profession, people less and less participate in different non-governmental organisations and the contact between people becomes more insignificant. For sure, this reduced trust means that we cannot fill this representative democracy with content by saying: "Yes, I trust this person who I voted for that he would represent me and take decisions in matters where I am not competent." And another aspect is, of course, digitalisation that provides an opportunity for everybody to be on-line continuously 24/7, to be involved, to express opinions and talk about developments in the society, and consequently, it causes a need for the direct democracy that, I agree, in specific matters would be suitable, but the democracy in Athens collapsed because they all voted for everything all the time, and in the end they voted: let's just give all the power to one specific persons. Arnis said that we should not talk about history, but I would like to talk about the Baltic Way as a very specific counter-example that could even inspire us in some way to think about possible solutions, because, firstly, the Baltic Way was a demand for the truth. We talk about independence, it was one



of the key demands, but another significant demand was the demand to disclose the truth about the Hitler–Stalin Pact. This truth could be disclosed only as a result of cooperation of specific people, it existed, of course, on an abstract level, in archives as a document or elsewhere as a scientific article, but as a publicly significant fact, this truth could be disclosed only as a result of people gathering and agreeing that it is like that. And another aspect – this was not a crowd in that sense. If we talk about crowd, it is, in my opinion, an unstructured group of people. The Baltic Way was not a crowd. It was one of the most structured types of people gathering that the world has ever experienced. From million to two million people, the number differs, but for sure it was a large number of people who, in a very organised way, came together and were able to create the chain from Tallinn, through Riga to Vilnius. And they did it because they trusted their representative who asked them to do it. Talking about history and thinking about the future, I think, that these two things: trust in our representatives and ability to reach an agreement to find this common truth is the only way how we can retain democracy, how we have experienced it for the last 200 years, sometimes it has been more efficient, sometimes less efficient, and we have to save ourselves from that democracy against which we were warned by people in the period from democracy in Athens and theoretically until the French and American revolutions in the end of the 18th century. Thank you!

A.R.: And lastly, a person who represents the local resources, who has grown up and developed here – Dāvis Sīmanis.

Dāvis Sīmanis: Yes, after listening to the other speakers, I had a feeling that I have been invited a bit like a clown, as a representative of population and crowd, because, referring to the person who is possibly



considered one who conceptualised liberal democracy, Rigan, Sir Isaiah Berlin, who, when asked how he had managed to live so long and happy life, said that the reason was that he had been so superficial, and I would like to think like that about myself. I would like to see this issue from a very superficial viewpoint. Because it is clear that the crisis in regard to liberal democracy is here and possibly the beautiful dream of Francis Fukuyama about the end of history has come to an end very quickly, and history has returned and we have to do something about this history and even liberal democracy as an image starts to look like, to a certain extent a banal middle-aged man in crisis whose only plan maybe is to buy a sports car or marry at least twice as young woman. And this awkward image of sports car and younger wife, in a way, represents what we now know as the national populism and economic populism that is present very often. We see how it impacts the change of power not only in Europe, but also outside Europe, all over the world. Democratically elected representatives suddenly start taking non-democratic or restricting decisions that threaten the judiciary system, fights against press freedom, etc. And, thinking about these odd motives of crisis and populism as a litmus paper, I would like to view the reasons for the existential crisis of the liberal democracy. In fact, we should think where populism has succeeded and where liberal democracy has failed. Even regardless of the fact that possibly there is some kind of error of categories encoded trying to compare them. First, I think that one thing is clarity or ambiguity of terms, because populism does not require clear terms, truth or lies, it is very easy to operate with such absolutely abstract concepts. Most often those are enemies of some kind that can be minorities, global corporations, organisations, etc. While liberal democracy, in fact, has to be very clear in what it tries



to define, but here, I think, the problem arises in the concept of liberal democracy, because, I think, liberal democracy itself includes a certain semantic contradiction, but maybe I won't go deeper in that. Another thing is communication. Populists and populism is more efficient in communication than any power that defines itself as liberal democracy or a system of liberal democracy. This is because they, first of all, operate with facts more aggressively, or vice versa, with facts that are not facts. They can use any kind of lies and make them the truth. At the same time, the representatives of liberal democracy this link in the new communicative world, the world, where totally new type of social communication exists, in my opinion, have not really found, and there is a reason which is possible a tradition that has existed before, certain conviction about the stability of its existence. Simply, they have not noticed that communication has changed. The third aspect is, I would like to call it the moral imperative, that in populism such moral imperative cannot exist, while, let's say, representatives of liberal democracy, seemingly, should have it. They should represent very stable moral values that, in fact, complies with a text written in the 19th century by Alexis de Tocqueville. He wrote about the things democracy lacks and it is morality. The problem is that liberal democracy often is implemented by people who do not possess this moral imperative and that is the third issue I wanted to identify.

A.R.: Thank you! Now, I will try to cross some of your opinions to make some kind of a link between these six different positions. I would like to start and ask Mr President to comment the tension that Dace mentioned in the case of Latvia between liberal democracy and nationalism tendencies.



E.L.: First, I would like to say that the book written by Dace “School of Europeanness” is, so to say, very interesting and it includes these theses, but I would not like to agree that you consider the Baltic Way as an expression of crowd. Just the opposite. It was a very structured and organised expression of will of a nation that was politically well-considered, with specific goals. And the type of expression, to ensure its efficiency, was opposite to a massive action – a nation can operate massively as well – it was a massive expression of political action of a nation. It was the most classically structured way how a nation can do it democratically or how it should do it.

In regard to liberalism and nationalism. I said already in the beginning that there is liberalism and there is nationalism. We have know what we define as liberalism and what we define as nationalism. I said in the beginning that democracy in its classical way includes people, certain group of people, who take decisions and subject themselves to this decision. This happens in a modern community or modern state, let’s say in a community where there are no nomads as it might be difficult to organise it in a community of nomads. But it is necessary for the state. If we talk about link to out country, of course, legally, via citizenship, but also emotional and cultural link, for example, if you have a cultural link to the state, you feel that you belong to a certain community of communication and this community of communication is related to certain cultural codes, language code and it includes the historical experience of community and responsibility for the future of this community, etc. If this is nationalism, liberalism even requires such nationalism. And in political science liberalism and nationalism are linked, because democracy means that society include several people,





and you have to know which ones are involved. Nationalism in anti-liberal expression is possible and that, of course, is not contemporary, because it threatens democracy. Nationalism as intolerance and placing yourself and your community higher than other communities, etc. I would say, in a truly democratic state, nationalism and democracy in the proper way, as I defined them, not as it is defined now, are necessary and complimentary. Nationalism is necessary in this way for liberal democracy to be able to function, and vice versa.

A.R.: Thank you! What do you as a politologist think – how widely is this right understanding of nationalism spread in the territory of Latvia? Are then 7 other people without you who think the same or ...?

E.L.: I think, out of million and a half of Latvians, one million think so. Because the politics realised by the government of Latvia that represents majority and has been democratically elected, it is national and at the same time liberal politics. There are extremists maybe, Sandra talked about extremists. I think, in Latvia, there are not so many of them and maybe even compared to other Western Europe countries we have less of them proportionally. We do not have such a party. I would not like to mention countries, because they will say that I as the President say something about other countries where I will have to go, but you know what I mean.

A.R.: Dace, would you like to answer Ms President or politologist Egils Levits?

D.Dz.: Yes, thank you for the crowd! Of course, it is important for us to emphasis that the Baltic Way was attended by a nation, because it is a positive unit that participated at the Baltic Way. But we cannot disregard



that there were elements of crowd, emotional organisation participated, people who do not belong to the community as citizens generally, for example, children. Of course, that any such emotionally mobilised group of people can become a crowd any time, especially, if it does not appeal to us with its opinions, etc., but that is not the key element of the dispute, in my opinion.

What I wanted to emphasise, really was that a nation can become a crowd, and a crowd can become a nation when they want to; then when, depending on situation and depending on who performs this assessment.

E.L.: A very brief remark: emotionality is everywhere, liberals are also emotion, if we see how a true liberal speaks. He speaks very emotionally. So, emotions belong to politics. And as emotionality does not denote the element of crowd, it belongs to rational politics.

D.Dz.: You emphasised the special role of rationality in ensuring the future of liberal democracy. It is an opposite to emotionality, isn't it?

A.R.: It turns out they do go together; we will clarify that in a moment. I wanted to ask Ms Kalniete to react to the role of the USA in the creation of democracy in Latvia and its possible destruction in future, as Una said.

Maybe you, from the point of the Central Europe, see how the role and possible motive of the USA change?

S.K.: Thank you for the question! I was listening very attentively, and, with all due respect, but I cannot agree with that, it was not so unequivocal. We cannot look from the point of view of tomorrow, we can just look from yesterday. Of course, after 1989, 1990 and 1991, the question where the Baltics will go was on the table, because it was



instantly clear where the Central Europe and Visegrád countries would be. It was clear they would be in the European Union and NATO, but we had to create a large network of allies. Prime Minister Bildt marked it correctly that the Nordic countries played a significant role for Europe to see us. I would like to say that Germany also played a significant role, but it was Germany of Helmut Kohl that was mostly concerned about its relations with the emerging superpower Russia and wanted to have friendly relations and to ensure that the matter of Germany could be solved. Germany got the role later. I personally think that Germany is their most important country for Latvia in Europe, because we can count on Germany. We cannot count on United Kingdom anymore, we could never truly count on France in terms of security and understanding of geopolitics. Of course, the USA is No. 1 ally for the Baltics, but it is not the only one. This is what I have always asked my colleagues diplomats to bear in mind when I worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because those who work with the American matters, they always think that no other world exists, but it is not true, because international relations consist of 1,000 different aspects. And for us relations with the Nordic countries and Germany are very important, because both these regions help the USA to see and understand us better.

A.R.: Thank you, Ms Kalniete. Would you like to respond to this critical reaction?

U.B.: Yes, I partially agree with you, but partially I do not agree, because I did not say that the USA was the only important country for Latvia or the Baltics, and I totally agree with you that Germany is a very significant partner. The Nordic countries are an important region for the Baltics. However, I would like to emphasise the special role of the USA, because,



as important Germany is for us politically, the military capacity of Germany and the USA differ greatly. Therefore, the USA is the main security guarantor for us, in security matters that provides the representatives of the USA stronger impact opportunities in Latvia. I think that our political elite in many different matters in the end of the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s was more sensitive towards the opinion of the USA, exactly because of the ability of the USA to impact developments in the world and ability to provide protection to Latvia, because the USA is the most important member of the NATO. Very often, due to this special role of the USA, our elite has been more sensitive towards the opinion of the USA.

S.K.: As I am from the elite that was more sensitive at the time, and I have been here all these years, I completely agree about security matters. But security has two forms – there is security guaranteed by the USA, and there is the “soft” security guaranteed by the European Union. They go hand in hand and cannot be separated, and future, welfare and security of the Baltics is impossible without them.

A.R.: I had a feeling that the President of the Republic of Latvia wanted to add something.

E.L.: I would like to emphasise that Ms Bergmane said one important thing, namely, power is not just the power we can see, but people belong to power, and power defines discourse. Power can impose normative regulations on others, and in this case, the USA has intellectual ability to determine discourse. Everything that happens in Europe happened in the USA one or two years ago. And that is the reason why the USA differ from other superpowers or other regions, the USA are important for us, because they structure problems and set discourse, and the USA serve as



normative power. In German, there is a word *Definitionsmacht* – the power defines. And the USA have it more than anybody else.

A.R.: I wanted to ask Dace to expand the comment about the place of emotionality in politics hoping that you might express a critical opinion about the optimistic view of the President of the Republic of Latvia that rationality is involved in democracy processes. Because there might be a more critical or pessimistic view that rationality is not possible in democracy processes in principle, because crowds and nations do not think. Only some people think, if they do. Could you please comment this optimistic opinion of Mr President about the involvement of rationality in democratic processes?

D.Dz.: Thank you! When you spoke, Mr President, and separated decision-making about values from decision-making about more complex matters, I thought that this was exactly the division. That it might be that the decision-making about values you mentioned almost had a legitimising role, and in this sphere a more emotional approach might be permitted to these matters.

The other set of questions about more complex issues, there we might use a rational approach. It really seemed to me that you separated these two things, and, I think, partially liberal democracy, at least in the United Kingdom, but also elsewhere, I think, is in crisis, because these complex matters are separated and given to experts, and many talk and write about a crisis of expertise, we might even say the crisis of rationality, and colleagues in the United Kingdom have been writing about the necessity that the left-wing liberal block should become emotional, rather than rational, and this, I think, is an interesting aspect that the question really is about the link between these two things. I would say that this rationalising



has, in fact, led us to crisis and I would like to talk about the matter of economics and see that we, when talking about the current situation of liberal democracy and its future opportunities, do not view the matters of economics, or the fact that liberal democracy is closely related to capitalism. I am not, of course, the only one. Latvian politologists, for example, Daunis Auers, have written about it that it is interesting that economic matters have been excluded from the political arena. Or Ivan Krastev, Bulgarian political theoretician, has written that political parties do not have any alternative offers to economic policy that has led to a situation that a rather large part of society has been excluded from, let's say, good life. Many of most likely would say that we do not understand much about financial capitalism or how it all works, this is one of the matters that, on one hand, might be given to experts, but, on the other hand, giving it to experts causes this or at least contributes to the crisis of liberal democracy.

A.R.: I would like to ask Una to react not to one of our panellists, but to the image used by the Swedish Prime Minister, Carl Bildt. He used a mythological image about history's progress, where the progress is inevitably towards the freedom that is in the end. I think, it was a reference to Barack Obama's or other President of the USA statement to the government of China claiming that they are "on the wrong side of history." And there is a mythical concept about history that is inevitably directed towards freedom and nothing can stop it. Of course, there will be difficulties and inconveniences. Could you as a historian please comment this mythological thought that the Swedish Prime Minister uses?

U.B.: Yes, thank you for this interesting question! The experience of the 20th century creates great pessimism and at the same time great optimism in regard to the future.



On one hand, I think that after World War Two, after Holocaust, after the crimes of the Soviet Union, we might have lost all illusions that this progress of history really takes us towards freedom and democracy and something positive. I think these developments show very well that nothing is safe and we cannot count on anything. Human nature can lead us to places where previous generations did not think we could ever get. At the same time the fact that it has happened, we or our predecessors have survived and we are here now, and the knowledge that it has happened possibly and hopefully allows us to see future positively, hoping that the knowledge about possible repeating of such developments would limit different trends in the society that might lead to such events. This knowledge about history and matters of memory are extremely important, therefore, on the Latvian and European level the debate is rather heated, and the fight about what we remember and how we remember, because these memories, to a great extent, impact how pessimistic or optimistic we are about future.

A.R.: As to the mythological image the Prime Minister used, you did not say a word, but maybe you are diplomatic and far-sighted and...

U.B.: You mean about the fact that history is progressing positively?

A.R.: Yes, that it progresses to a better and better life, and there is more and more freedom and equality, and everything will be more beautiful.

U.B.: History is not directed in a positive direction, but the fact that we know it for sure does not progress positively, this allows us to see future with certain optimism.

A.R.: May I ask the Prime Minister? Carl Bildt? Did you receive the translation? Would you answer? You were not invited to this panel, but may I ask you to answer to what she said. About your mythology.



Carl Bildt: I would not call it mythology, but, as I said, I do not think that we profoundly disagree. I said that history is not a straight line, it goes in circles and in waves. But, if you take the long way of history, I would argue that the tide of the freedom is the tide of the future. There have been notable cases of societies and ages falling back in darkness, absolutely! The 20th century is a good example of that, but, if you stretch it over couple of centuries, I think my point is there. And I would also like to make some remarks on the context of discussing Russia and China. I do not believe that Chinese people genetically are disposed to dictatorship. I think that Chinese people are in these particular aspects the same as we are. And that Chinese nation will demand respect and dignity. In the same way as most other people do in some point in time and that would have its affect on the political system of that country as well.

Is this going to happen tomorrow? Slightly unlikely. Next week? I would not promise that either. History takes some time, but I would say there are some fundamentals that we should be optimistic about. Thank you very much!

A.R.: Pauls mentioned in his introduction that democracy in the history of western civilisation has not been viewed as something desired, good and something we should strive for. However, I have to admit that I did not follow your thought from this historical statement and how you reached your final conclusion that you hope that democracy in its representative form will be our organising vision of future. I did not understand it, but it might be my inattentiveness or something. I waned to ask you another question. What should happen that next year or in close future, 600,000 or million people in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia would join hands? What should happen for something like that to happen



again? Because the Swedish Prime Minister urged us to work towards the unknown, we have to work together and join forces, and it would be beautiful if we could again stand in a line again, and join hands. What should happen for something like that to repeat?

P.R.: First, to reply to your first question, although you did not ask it to me. I would say it is clear why we want to retain this system. Liberal democracy as we have experienced it over the past 200 years has ensured the greatest ever welfare and freedom of humankind, and this is thanks to this discovery that it can operate as a structured system that includes representation and minority rights are protected.

This system is open and developed over time. It was not perfect but it has expanded over these 200 years, and now, of course, it is threatened due to different reasons, but I think that the threats that pose danger is that we might actually return to a system that would be less free and where welfare is considerably smaller, and that is the reason why we are interested in retaining this system. We have to think how to do it. As to what should happen – I hope that nothing like that will happen, because we stood in a line because Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were occupied and we wanted to prevent that. I hope we will never have such a situation again, we will not have such a necessity, but we have to be aware of what we can learn from it. It is clear that cooperation between people and trust in those people who organised this large manifestation, it was trust that we are ready to participate, get involved, cooperate and this was thanks to trust and will to be united in the truth. I think that I as a representative of public media would also like to say that it was exactly the same that is said about political systems. It is applicable to the internal communication systems of society. Without a certain structure





and ability for a person to understand which information sources are trustworthy and which are not, and an opportunity to check it in a reasonable way, we reach the situation that is now called the post-truth or fake news era where so much information is coming over our heads. Part of it is true, part is a lie, part is half-truth. If we do not have the structured sorting ability, we lose reference-points and we encounter threats again that we might reach a situation where our opportunities to participate rationally and emotionally are threatened. These things cannot be so clearly separated as Mr President said. I think we are rational and emotional beings.

A.R.: Can you differentiate between them? Can you differentiate?

P.R.: Let's say, emotions set goals and then we with our rational mind think how to reach those goals. However, rationality is connected only after the goals are set.

A.R.: Are you a strict follower of [David] Hume?

P.R.: But I think that internal communication structures of media and society have to be clear enough that people could efficiently understand what happens.

A.R.: Now, I would like to talk to the representative of society who is engaged in art from time to time. I would like to ask Dāvis a question. I see the Baltic Way, in the honour of which we have gathered here, as a great work of art, it was a very successful work of art. The role of art in politics is underestimated, especially within the framework of liberal democracy. Tell me, what can art give to the state? Some time ago, I spread a thesis that state cannot exist without art. Namely, not that art cannot exist without state but state cannot exist without art. It is all just



fiction but, if art appears, it is a creative act and then a state can emerge. What can art give us in this democratisation or political process we have talked about?

D.S.: First, most likely, emotionality that everybody has mentioned, that is something that art can give to a state. The issue is that art itself, similarly as the crisis model of liberal democracy that I mentioned, the art itself is becoming more and more populist, and to a certain extent the art that actually might give some kind of content and not ideological content creating patriotic or other concepts in the society and creating, let's say, national state, but art that just makes the society smarter and makes it think. There is not much such art left. Or, to be precise, it exists in the large pluralism and great volume of everything that we seemingly call the art facts or art objects, there is not much of that what can make us smarter, and, of course, I totally agree that it is the wisdom that has to exist for the state to be able to exist in the first place. But I wanted to say another thing and I, similarly as Pauls, reply to questions that were not asked. One remark in regard to what should happen for us to join the Baltic Way again. I would say that this is one the issues. Not that something should happen from the outside, but what should happen inside us for us to stand there. In this case, I am talking more about the Latvian, it is difficult maybe to talk in a wider scale, I think that Latvian society, due to certain internal passivity, is not able to express a truly strong and public protest to say that something is not right, this is because we often allow lack of lawfulness in this country. Specifically, when we tried to protest against oligarchs, we can gather 500 to 600 self-respecting people from Riga. It is that situation that, in fact, it would be nice if we could find the strength in ourselves to show some kind of protest when we see something unfair.





P.R.: If I may answer. I was asked about 600,000 or million, and I think this would not happen. I think, there is a significant difference, because I completely agree that society should be more active and it is one of the issues that crumbs liberal democracy that people are not enough involved, mutually and via their representatives. I would like to say there have been times. Do you remember, in 2007 there was the case of Grava and there was a list of 10,000 people that is not a short list. But the thing is that in our everyday life we are not enough involved and if the Baltic Way can teach us something what we should think about in future, I do not think that the lesson is that we should organise campaigns with million people attending, but we should personally participate. Social networks, likes, retweets, posts cannot replace that everyone of us personally participate, meet, talk and go. It is, of course, of great importance.

A.R.: Thank you! Ms Kalniete?

S.K.: It is true, the key question is not about how to organise it, etc., but what happens internally. However, we can be proud of something that is a work of art, just like the Baltic Way was, and I am talking about Song Festival, because it is a general need. It is self-organisation of people. Of course, with the help from state and municipalities, but just with one order so large movement could not exist, because the next work of art is created over the period of five years, the final concert of the Song Festival. I think that is one of the key features of our culture and identity where we show our unity.

D.S.: I would like to think that it was some other passion that caused Baltic Way and it is another passion that creates the unity of the Song Festival.



Because the Song Festival is not turning against something unfair in the past, but the Baltic Way was that, and, I think, it would be a factor that would acknowledge our society, if we would find a sense in ourselves.

S.K.: Yes, I agree with that, but I would also like to talk about Song Festival that was a form of protest, because during Soviet times, it was a hidden form of protest.

A.R.: It was, but it is not anymore!

S.K.: And that is the best. That we still need the Song Festival as something positive that lifts us. I think that is the most wonderful thing.

A.R.: I would like now that we would not raise but that we would land a bit lower. As Pauls mentioned Aristotle, I would like to refer to Aristotle to ask you the following question. Democracies exist with the help of institutions. Election is one of the non-democratic institutions. It is a clearly oligarch mechanism. I would like to quote Aristotle: "Election is an oligarchical lottery, lottery of officials is democratic mechanism." This idea that representatives should be selected in a lottery, has existed over entire Aristotelianism school until [Charles-Louis] Montesquieu, afterwards either in the form that election is oligarchical or that it is aristocratic mechanism. This way the uninherited aristocracy is created via election, but, if it is done via lottery, it is democratic, because any citizen who can participate in the lottery, he can be picked and he will have to sit at the parliament. European or Latvia. My question is as follows. As you have noted different existing issues of democracy or liberal democracy, I would like to ask you: in your opinion, if Latvia would attempt to return to such classical Aristotelian approach and instead of election a lottery



would be implemented in Latvia that would guarantee that everybody would have a chance to get positions, and, secondly, there would be less fake news or political technologists or others that you referred to, they would not have virtually any impact on the outcome of election. Only, if they would be able to get to the lottery box.

I would like to ask you to participate in such an experiment. What would be benefits and losses if a lottery would be organised instead of election in Latvia? Let's start with you, Mr President of the Republic of Latvia.

E.L.: Yes, I have, of course, thought about it. The system of lottery, of course, is completely democratic, because it represents the basis. Those people who are voters and, as a result, those people who are the selected officials, in their competence and basic values, they are very close to each other, and in some countries such a system exists to a certain extent. There are some countries where the assessors are selected randomly, so there is one professional judge and two assessors that have been picked out randomly and you must take this position, unless you can bring a note from a doctor.

Why is it necessary? And this is because of what I said in the beginning that all the people are equal in regard to their system of values, because justice represents the system of values and sense of justice. Judge, who is a professional lawyer, and a person, who has been randomly selected, have the same voting power and they participate as the court, and they are equally valuable. It is, of course, an exception. Because it is not about the sense of justice, and there we are all the same. If we would like to solve other matters, I would like to say that it is difficult to separate rationality and emotionality, but it is possible. Let's say, it is not completely the same. If there are rational decisions, and because of that we, for





example, study at universities and gain experience. To obtain a higher competence in certain spheres, which means rational competence, rather than emotional competence. Not an engineer as an emotional expression but engineer as a rational expression, not that a surgeon would go and emotionally cut stomach open.

Democracy really has this difficult task: to achieve that people would voluntarily elect officials who, to put it simply, would be smarter than them. It is the principle of aristocracy, essentially, the principle of oligarchy. Oligarchy, to a certain extent, has always belonged to the choice of democracy, oligarchy belongs to democracy.

Oligarchy in the sense that power is delegated to a small group of people, and, from formal point of view, it is oligarchic. But it means that these people are trusted. It is what Pauls said before that they would take better decisions than I would. And I think if me as a rationally reasoning citizen would say: "You know, I am not sure how to organise the Song Festival." If I would start organising it, nothing would work there, but I trust when I see that, for example, Dace Melbārde is there or Sandra Kalniete is there. And I trust them, because I know you are more competent than I am, and therefore I choose you to do this or something else.

If it would be a lottery, I would say that I can organise it all myself. So, there is a rational element, how to achieve higher rationality with this election system in taking rational decisions, it is the sense, and therefore in spheres where more rational decisions are necessary, there we need the representation mechanism that we select.

A.R.: Do you as a politologist really think that competence impacts the outcome of election more than hair style?



E.L.: I would say that there is at least hope that competence is hidden in the hair style.

A.R.: Ms Kalniete, could you please comment what advantages and deficiencies would you see, if Latvia would go from election system to lottery?

S.K.: Mr President took it so seriously, I cannot comment on it seriously. But I will tell you those few things that have to be considered straight away. In sociology, 1,000 people are considered a representative cross-section of a society, therefore the parliament should include at least 1,000 people, otherwise this chance of lottery would not represent entire society, its mood, skills, etc. Twenty-seven countries. But for me personally, the matter that is more interesting, is the matter of the power of decision and its durability that such a parliament passes and how this parliament can and how it is forbidden to change its status. Because any elected position, including position obtained accidentally, it has a tendency to stick to a person, for a person to become irreplaceable, moreover, there would be a parallel and strong group of society that, over, I do not know, four or five years when the parliament is in office, will need things over that period. Because we never know what will come next. They will need certain decisions to be taken, either it would be about “Tīrīga” or nano-water or other things. Imagine, how the institution of lobby would flourish, and how large amounts of money would circulate over a very short period of time.

Now, we know who oligarchs are and what they want. Then that would be a very dynamic process. I could go on like this, I am not enthusiast neither about that, nor this.



A.R.: You do not see such perspectives in that, to improve the public involvement, to reduce the issue of “us and them” that exists between government and nation, right? You do not see any perspectives, you just see risks and difficulties there? I would like to still hold on to the participation and I would like to ask Una and Dace the same question. Please tell us, what, in your opinion, are benefits and risks, if we would go from election to lottery system?

U.B.: The benefit might be that we would not have election campaigns, we would save money, etc., but risks are so clear and I see, for example, the problem related to human freedom. We are free to participate at election, we are free not to participate, but in this case we would have a lottery, we would be forced to get involved in the state administration, even if we do not want it.

The issue of freedom would emerge. And another problem is the problem of representation, because the idea of democracy is that people elected in the Parliament, they are our representatives, they represent us and, of course, not always it works in practice, but it is the idea we work to achieve. Those people who would win a lottery, however, they would not have the duty to represent, because no group of society has invested trust in them and their votes, therefore, this mechanism of representation would not work.

A.R.: Yes, I feel that my enthusiasm is hurt more and more, but, Dace, maybe you can help me, because I feel there is no hope left anymore.

D.Dz.: If we see it as an exercise of thought, I think, in such a situation we could observe that the scope of decisions taken by such a parliament reduces more and more. I think, we would soon find a mechanism how to





transfer this important decision-making process to other places and institutions, and then, we talked about it recently, that the state is important but we are, however, a part of larger structures and the fact that decisions were transferred, or, let's say, British society considered that they cannot see anymore who represents whom and who takes decisions, and that was partially mentioned as the reason of Brexit, I think possibly in such situation we would see that the scope of decisions taken by the Parliament would reduce even more. At some point, it would lead to something like revolution and then we could decide whether it is positive or negative.

A.R.: OK, let's remember that Ms Kalniete also mentioned reduced sovereignty in the context of the European Union, but the politologist Egils Levits wanted to...

E.L.: Democracy, developed democracy is related to elite. We talk about political elite or cultural elite, etc. Elite is a pyramid of competence, but aristocracy is an inherited elite, in democracy it is the elite of competence. It should at least be like that. To a certain extent, it is like that. And this pyramid can be steeper or flatter. And I have to say, if we, for example, view how Latvian society differs from the French society. To get into the Parliament of France, to become a minister, a person has to undergo a long filtration process. You cannot come in from the street and become a parliament member. The case of [Emmanuel] Macron is an exception. But in Latvia, it is rather simple, you can come in and not only become a parliament member or minister. Therefore, it is closer to your thesis about the lottery, because you do not have to undergo the filtration, learning and competence gaining process. It exists, of course, but it is not so strict. For example, in the United Kingdom, it is not possible, I think, but in Latvia it is possible. And certainly it means that the Latvian political elite is closer to



the nation in terms of thinking and therefore the criticism of political elite stating that the elite thinks similarly to any other person, more similar than any other person in an average society among 1,000 people. Therefore, it means that we in this sense, Aristotle and you with Montesquieu, you three together, we are rather democratic.

A.R.: Pauls, I understand that you are a serious person and weird things...

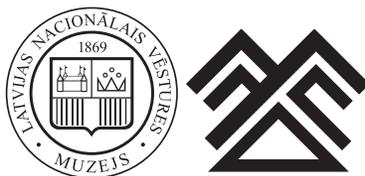
P.R.: I do not agree with all rational arguments. I just wanted to say that they say that lottery is a tax imposed on the stupid ones, because they pay money for lottery tickets that the most likely will not ever win. Yes, and similarly, I think, any society that would implement such a system, it would be a severe punishment for a silly society.

A.R.: Towards a silly one, rather than a smarter one? Yes. Dāvis, do you have something to add?

D.S.: Listening to all these answers, I remembered a story by Jorge Luis Borges. The story is about Sumerian country where the power is elected in a lottery but very soon the lottery becomes crazier and more complicated, because they start to draw lots, for example, when somebody can kill somebody else or who has to be killed, who owes to somebody an amount of money, etc., etc., until it all becomes a cannibalism celebration. He saw this frenzy of power that is expressed through such a lottery. Of course, from this point of view, the frenzy of power, I think, is very pronounced in Latvia and absolutely without competence and expertise. If three people told you that you qualify as a minister, you are already sure that you are qualified. I think, from that point of view, of course, the problem is that we elect the incompetent ones, but in the case of lottery, things might become even more dangerous.



A.R.: I thought that it might increase participation significantly, because everybody might have a chance to get to the Parliament [Saeima] and therefore the content of anonymous comments might change significantly, because any of us might be sitting there. Moreover, Pauls, I cannot agree with you about the silliness. I would like to thank you! Unless the organisers of this event think we should say something impressive in the end, some kind of an appeal, for example: "Let's be more democratic, or the opposite, let's think or let's start doing something." We might, of course, end with such an appeal, and probably that would be a more fluent transition to beverages and other attributes of celebration, but I would suggest to end without any appeals, I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia, Egils Levits, politologist, Egils Levits, Member of the European Parliament, Sandra Kalniete, Teaching Fellow of the London School of Economics, Una Bergmane, Professor of the Oxford University, Dace Dzenovska, commentator of magazine "Ir", Pauls Raudseps, and film director, Dāvis Sīmanis. Thank you!



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