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Baltic Freedom Day, 1985

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the United States non-recognition policy by which our government refuses to recognize the forcible Soviet occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It has been 45 years since the dark year of 1940 when invading Soviet armies, in collusion with the Nazi regime, overran these three independent Baltic Republics.

The atrocious character of the Soviet oppression was shockingly illustrated by the imprisonment, deportation, and murder of close to 100,000 Balts during a four-day reign of terror June 14-17, 1941. The suffering of this brutal period was made even worse when Nazi forces struck back through these three states at the beginning of the Nazi-Soviet war and instituted a civil administration under control of the nefarious Gestapo. Due to Soviet and Nazi tyranny, by the end of World War II, the Baltic nations had lost twenty percent of their total population.

Today, suppression and persecution are the daily burdens of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian people. Soviet policies are specifically targeted toward the very ethnic life and historical heritage of the Baltic nations. Russification takes place under many guises: forced relocation, expanded colonization by Russian immigrants, and heavy pressure against the indigenous religious, cultural, and social traditions.

Yet despite this crushing system, the Baltic peoples courageously continue to resist amalgamation by pressing for their national, political, and religious rights. Peaceful expression of demands through the underground press, petitions to government officials, demonstrations, the activities of the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, Helsinki monitoring groups, and committees to defend the rights of religious believers command the admiration of everyone who loves and honors freedom.

Significantly, the defense of national and personal rights is led not by those who grew up during the years of independence, but by a new generation born and raised under the Soviet system. The message of these heroes, both young and old, is: "You, our free brothers and sisters, are our voice to the free world. You must not cease to inform the world of what is being inflicted upon us here behind the Iron Curtain, for it is from your efforts that we get our strength to survive."

All the people of the United States of America share the aspirations of the Baltic nations for national independence. The United States upholds their rights to determine their own national destiny, free of foreign interference. For 45 years, the United States has not recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union, and it will not do so in the future.

The Congress of the United States, by Senate Joint Resolution 66, has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation for the observance of June 14, 1985, as "Baltic Freedom Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim June 14, 1985, as Baltic Freedom Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of liberty and freedom for all oppressed people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of June, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

Ronald Reagan