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## Lithuanian Independence Day, 1985

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Sixty-seven years ago, a small nation achieved freedom in the aftermath of World War I. Proclaiming the Lithuanian Republic, its founders stepped forward on February 16, 1918, to assert their country's independence and commitment to a government based on justice, democracy, and the rights of individuals. Twenty-two years later, Soviet tyranny imposed itself on Lithuania and denied the Lithuanian people their just right of national self-determination as well as basic human freedoms.

Among the freedoms most consistently attacked by Soviet authorities is the freedom of religion. The victims of these attacks have often been Catholic Church figures, such as Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, Father Sigitas Tamkevicius, and, most recently, Father Jonas-Kastytis Matulionis. Their crimes: administering to the spiritual needs of the faithful.

Yet the people of Lithuania refuse to submit quietly. Hundreds of thousands of people have signed petitions demanding the release of priests and other human and civil rights leaders. Underground publications such as the sixty-fourth issue of the "Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania" and forty-first issue of "The Dawn," which have recently come to the West, continue to inform the world of ongoing persecutions.

Americans are united in an enduring belief in the right of peoples to live in freedom. The United States has refused to recognize the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union. We must be vigilant in the protection of this ideal because we know that as long as freedom is denied to others, it is not truly secure here.

We mark this anniversary of Lithuanian Independence with a renewed hope that the blessings of liberty will be restored to Lithuania.

The Congress of the United States, by House Joint Resolution 655, has designated February 16, 1985, as Lithuanian Independence Day and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim February 16, 1985, as Lithuanian Independence Day. I invite the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and to reaffirm their dedication to the ideals which unite us and inspire others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of February, 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*