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Baltic Freedom Day, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In June 1940, acting under the color of a secret protocol to the infamous Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact signed the previous year, Soviet forces occupied the independent Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These small, democratic republics were crushed by the armies of their expansionist neighbor and illegally incorporated into the Soviet empire. In the aftermath of the Soviet takeover, tens of thousands of Balts were imprisoned, deported, or killed. Their religious and cultural heritage was denigrated and repressed. An alien political system, inimical to the ideals of individual liberty and self-determination, was imposed upon them.

The end of World War II saw the defeat of ambitious empire-builders in Germany and Japan, but foreign domination of the Baltic States that resulted from the collusion of Hitler and Stalin remained in place. For nearly five decades, the Soviet Union has tried in vain to convince the Baltic peoples to accept its hegemony, but its efforts are doomed to failure.

The situation has improved for some Soviet human rights activists in recent months, but Baltic men and women still suffer imprisonment, banishment, and persecution for daring to protest the continuing suppression of their national independence and cultures. Yet, despite the risks, they continue to speak out, to plead, and to claim their rights to religious, cultural, and political freedom.

Our government has never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union, and we never will. The American people, citizens of a land conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality under God for all, support the aspirations of the Baltic people to regain the freedom that was theirs and to chart their own course. To this goal we pledge anew our unswerving commitment.

By Senate Joint Resolution 249, the Congress of the United States has authorized and requested the President to designate June 14, 1988, as "Baltic Freedom Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate June 14, 1988, as Baltic Freedom Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate remembrances and ceremonies and to reaffirm their commitment to 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-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan