

THE BALTIC WAY

August 23, 1939 inflicted wounds to tens of nations and states. Some of these wounds are still bleeding.

The Hitler-Stalin pact unleashed an attack on Poland, which was destroyed and divided between the signatory states. The Hitler-Stalin pact assigned the three Baltic states to the Soviet sphere of interest. Three member states of the League of Nations were occupied by the Red Army; three independent states ceased to exist. The Soviet Union has done everything to remove the republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from the memory and map of Europe, from your libraries and textbooks, your sense of justice, your grief and your minds. Many have let their conscience be lulled and put up with the implementation of the Hitler-Stalin pact even during the last decades of millenium.

This is why we, the three Baltic nations, turn to Europe and the world community today, on the 50th anniversary of the deal, in firm conviction that the democratic majority has retained its moral will-power, sense of justice and willingness to share our assessment: the criminal Hitler-Stalin pact has to be voided! The essence of the Hitler-Stalin pacts and its secret protocols was imperialist division of the spheres of interest between two great powers. On the basis of this criminal deal the Soviet Union unilaterally violated all the international treaties concluded with the Baltic republics, infringed on the historical right of the Baltic nations to self-determination, presented ruthless ultimatums to the Baltic republics, occupied them with overwhelming military force, and under conditions of military occupation and heavy political terror carried out their violent annexation. The Hitler-Stalin pacts and their still-enforced secret protocols were and are aimed at the destruction of sovereignty and independence of other states.

Today, on the 50th anniversary of the deal, we remind all the nations of the world that under international law treaties of this kind are criminal and unlawful from the very moment of signing. This knowledge, which the apologists of imperialism and red fascists have preferred to overlook, has supported and kept us alive despite the decades-long public terror and systematic genocide. We have remained faithful to democracy and human rights even while the colonial power, proceeding from its imperialist interests, set out to annihilate the Baltic nations physically by means of mass murders, deportations of thousands of people to Siberia, and purposeful denationalization of our towns, villages, factories, schools and culture.

The Hitler-Stalin pact is still shaping the Europe of today, our once - common Europe. Yet we are convinced that the European community and democratic forces in the East will unite their voices in support of the demand of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that the pact together with its secret protocol be denounced and declared null and void from the moment of signing. Only then will Europe divest itself of the last colonies of the Hitler-Stalin era, and the Baltic nations will get the opportunity to determine their own destiny on the basis of free self-determination.

One may close one's eyes to the Baltic problem, but it will not cease to exist. For us, it is a problem of inalienable human rights; for you, it is a problem of double standards and security; but one way or another, we have to solve it together, proceeding from the principles of international law. A common European home can only be set up if all European nations are granted a free right to self-determination. The Baltic nations have sought ways for restoring their independent statehood in a way that would correspond to the interests of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Soviet Union, and guarantee security in Northern Europe. In our view stability on the shores of the Baltic must be built on a system of treaties such as was in force before the deal of 1939, and which stems from the peace treaties concluded between the Soviet Union and the Baltic states in 1920. We have searched for a solution, and we have called our solution the BALTIC WAY.

The BALTIC WAY is a parliamentary way for the peaceful restoration of our statehood.

The BALTIC WAY does not represent a threat to anyone.

The BALTIC WAY will guarantee social security, civil rights and economic progress to all the people in the Baltic republics regardless of their nationality.

The BALTIC WAY is a way to democracy.

The BALTIC WAY is the only way to freedom, brotherhood and equality on the shores of our common Baltic Sea.

Every village, town and state has risen again from the ashes of the of the Second World War - except for the three Baltic states, former member states of the League of Nations. Have you not noticed our absence? Today, nearly half a century later, we are calling out to our friends, in the North and South, East and West: the Baltic states are standing on the threshold of Europe again. Europe greets us today as its longlost sons. As for ourselves, we have never considered ourselves lost. Let us, then, extend hands to one another and walk together along our common way: the BALTIC WAY is the way of Europe; the BALTIC WAY is the way of abolishing the last colonial possessions in Europe; the BALTIC WAY is the way to our common home.

Brothers and sisters in East and West, we are prepared to forget about your double standards, if you will find in yourselves courage to demand the application of the principles of international law not only in Africa and Asia but also in Europe. Let us unite our voices and demand that Hitler-Stalin pacts together with their secret protocols be declared null and void from the very moment of their signing! Let us declare the annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania unlawful!

We are ready, we are arriving.