



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS
SEIMAS

VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS
WINNER OF THE FREEDOM
Prize





Vytautas Landsbergis, first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania
and Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas
Vilnius, March 1997, photo by Gintaras Mačiulis
Archives of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

*We were already free when the reform movement Sąjūdis was emerging,
when we felt the sense of spiritual unity growing from the realisation that
there were so many of us and that we were not afraid.
We felt free, when we elected our true Parliament and declared Independence
we believed in. In the course of its consolidation, we lived as a nation of free
people in an independent state.*

**Vytautas Landsbergis, first Head of State of the re-established
independent Lithuania, 25 August 1991**

Slightly more than a quarter of a century has passed since the historic events of 1990–1992, which were crucial and fateful for the Lithuanian state. As the rallies by *Sąjūdis* with hundreds of thousands of participants rippled across the country in 1988–1990, the miracle of the Baltic Way astonished the global community, and the representation of the nation – the Supreme Council, later to be called the Reconstituent Seimas, was democratically elected, the *Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania* was declared on 11 March 1990, followed by the adoption of the *Provisional Basic Law (Provisional Constitution)*. After 50 years of Soviet occupation, the process of legal drafting and institution-building began in the

independent state and Lithuania's return to the global community of nations became the key goal of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas. International recognition did not come in one day. In 1991, the state of Lithuania, the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas, and Lithuanian citizens resolutely resisted the Soviet military aggression and heroically withstood the challenge at the highest cost of the lives of the national defenders. A month later, in February 1991, the nation voted in the plebiscite to undoubtedly confirm to the world its self-determined will for independence, as well as its support for the legitimate national government. The active reaction of the international community and foreign parliamentarians, the support of the Russian democratic forces, and the increasing significance of international visits by Lithuanian state representatives were the crucial factors that contributed to strengthening Lithuania's positions in the international community. The *Treaty on the Foundations of Inter-State Relations* between the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic signed in Moscow on 29 July 1991 and ratified after the dissolution of the USSR was of profound significance.

Following the coup in August 1991, marking the agony of the Soviet Union and the failure of the communist forces, Lithuania enjoyed a period of faster international recognition. The drafting of the *Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania* and its adoption in the referendum on 25 October 1992, as well as its signature and promulgation on 6 November 1992, crowned the work of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas.

It would be impossible to apprehend these developments without analysing the political activities of Vytautas Landsbergis, Member of the *Sąjūdis* Initiative Group and the *Sąjūdis* Seimas, Chairman of the Council of the *Sąjūdis* Seimas, Chairman of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Signatory to the Act of Independence of Lithuania, first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania, and winner of this year's Freedom Prize. Stasys Stačiokas, co-author of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, believes that in the context of state-building, there is no more suitable epithet for Vytautas Landsbergis than “the herald and builder of Freedom”.

Vytautas Landsbergis, as first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania, Chairman of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, and winner of the Freedom Prize, proved to be an active and creative person and



Vytautas Landsbergis, first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania and Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas, at the rally in Vingis Park in support of independence. Approximately 300 thousand people assembled in the Park declared their determination for Lithuania's independence

Vilnius, 7 April 1990

Photo by Romualdas Požerskis (personal archive)

a leader politically committed to the aspirations of the Lithuanian nation and consolidation of freedom and democratic values. “Vytautas Landsbergis has always fought for the freedom and dignity of not only the whole nation but also every individual, thus inspiring us all and destroying the entire inhumane Soviet system”, Stasys Stačiokas says.

Vytautas Landsbergis, winner of the Freedom Prize and one of the founding fathers of our modern state, was born in Kaunas on 18 October 1932 into the family of Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, an architect, and Ona Jablonskytė-Landsbergienė, an ophthalmologist. In his native city, he graduated from secondary school and Juozas Gruodis Music School. He studied at the State Conservatoire in Vilnius in 1950–1955. Since then, Landsbergis has been living in the Lithuanian capital.

While still a student in 1952, Landsbergis began teaching and pursued this career until March 1990. He taught piano at Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Music School in Vilnius, State Conservatoire and its faculties in Klaipėda, as well as at Vilnius Pedagogical Institute. In 1969 he defended his thesis *Composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' Creative Work*. From 1978 to 1990 he taught at the Lithuanian Music Academy where he presented a thesis for his Doctor Habilitatus degree in 1994.



Lithuania is free again. The *Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania* is adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. From left to right: Kazimieras Motieka; Bronislovas Kuzmickas; Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas; Česlovas Vytautas Stankevičius; and Aloyzas Sakalas, Liudvikas Sabutis
Vilnius, 11 March 1990

Photo by Vladimiras Gulevičius (personal archive)



Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas, with Raimundas Bučys (on the left) and Andrius Česnavičius (on the right), officers of the Security Unit of the Supreme Council, in the Parliament building
Vilnius, 13 January 1991

Photo by Romualdas Požerskis (personal archive)

Landsbergis is a politician and art, music and culture historian, who published over 100 books and a number of articles on the creative work of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis in the early years of the career and on Lithuanian and international politics in subsequent years. He edited and published all piano compositions by Čiurlionis. As a publicist and public figure, he long served as a member of the Board and Secretariat of the Lithuanian Composers' Union, Chairman of the Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Society, and Honorary Chairman of the Lithuanian Chess Federation. He also authored poetry books, memoirs and a collection of prose. Landsbergis was awarded the Lithuanian SSR prize for his monograph *Čiurlionis' Creative Work* in 1975 and for his monograph *Česlovas Sasnauskas' Life and Work* in 1988. Landsbergis held the post of the Chairman of the Board of the *Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis* International Piano and Organ Competition in 1995–2008.

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[...] this musician was a very strong leader who talked pianissimo but acted forte. Like Charles De Gaulle in World War II, Landsbergis knew that his only source of power was his absolute inflexibility on matters of principle. His insight and personal will enabled him not just to navigate the perilous course that ultimately led to the restoration of his country's independence after fifty-one years of Soviet occupation.

Richard Nixon, Former US President, 1992

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Mr Landsbergis' qualities of leadership became manifest during the Revival Period and Singing Revolution when Lithuania tested the boundaries drawn by Mikhail Gorbachev in the context of *Perestroika*. Lithuania's path towards independence might have been very different without the resolve of Mr Landsbergis, the Lithuanian Reform Movement *Sąjūdis*, and the courage of the Lithuanian people. Landsbergis was elected to the Initiative Group of the *Sąjūdis* on 3 June 1988 and to the *Sąjūdis* Seimas and the Council of the Seimas at the Inaugural Congress of the *Sąjūdis* on 22–23 October 1988. He served as the Chairman of the Council of the *Sąjūdis* Seimas from 25 November 1988 to 21 April 1990 and as the Honorary Chairman of the *Sąjūdis* from 15 December 1991. When founding the Homeland Union (Lithuanian conservative party) on 1 May 1993, he was elected as its Chairman and re-elected to this position in 1995, 1998 and 2000 to serve in this capacity until 2003. Since 2003, he has been a member of the Presidium of the Homeland Union, chairing its Policy Committee in 2003–2013.

Residents of Panevėžys City elected Landsbergis as a people's deputy of the USSR on 26 March 1989 and as a member of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 24 February 1990. Elected as the President of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 11 March 1990, he chaired the parliamentary session that voted for restoring and declaring the independence of the Republic of Lithuania on that day. Under the Interim Constitution, he became the top governmental official, the actual Head of State.

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Tonight, Bush included Landsbergis as a champion of freedom alongside Andrei Sakharov, the late Soviet dissident, Poland's Lech Walesa, leader of the Solidarity trade union, and Czechoslovakia's playwright president, Vaclav Havel.

"What one man draws from history, another finds in music," Bush said. "President Landsbergis of Lithuania, who adopted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as an anthem for his people's movement, was asked why the strains of Beethoven should resound through the streets and squares of Vilnius. He replied that it is because the Ninth is 'a symphony of freedom and victory against slavery, insidiousness and darkest hatred.'"

The Washington Post, 20 May 1990

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From the historical standpoint, Vytautas Landsbergis came to the fore as he chaired the session of the Lithuanian Parliament when the 11 March Act was adopted and Lithuania's independence was re-established, as well as during the drafting of the constitutional framework and the Constitution itself.

As the highest official of the state, he demonstrated his strong stance in the fatal hours of Soviet aggression and violence in January and August 1991. Landsbergis was one of the leaders of the Council of the Baltic States in 1990–1992 and chaired the Commission for Drawing up the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania in 1990–1991. The achievements of Vytautas Landsbergis, as the first Head of State, left a strong imprint in the international arena. International visits and treaties between the Republic of Lithuania and foreign countries in 1990–1992 ensured an international status for Lithuania. His stance in negotiations and agreements with Russia resulted in the withdrawal of the Russian military troops from Lithuania within a year. The parliamentary activities that Vytautas Landsbergis was engaged in between 1990 and 1992 culminated in the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. These political

achievements of Vytautas Landsbergis, as a politician and leader, have laid the foundations for Lithuania's statehood, which continue to be critical in state-building today.

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President Landsbergis, your role in freeing your country was as crucial for Lithuania as that of Václav Havel's for Czechoslovakia and Lech Wałęsa's for Poland. You are an ardent patriot, who forsook your professional vocation, which had little to do with politics, in order to lead the fight against the totalitarian regime. Everyone in the Alliance admired the way you organised the referendum on independence and the way you defended the Lithuanian Parliament, without giving in to fierce intimidation and armed pressure that took the lives of your fellow countrymen in January 1991. Your firm commitment to peaceful protest has finally brought success.

Manfred Wörner, NATO Secretary General
Welcome address at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council
NATO Headquarters, 23 September 1992

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During the parliamentary elections in September–October 1992, Landsbergis won a seat in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and, from then onwards, acted as the leader of the parliamentary opposition under the decision adopted by vote of the *Tėvynės Santara* (Homeland Accord), the Seimas joint opposition. He was also a member of the Lithuanian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Lithuanian delegation to the Baltic Assembly. In October 1996, he was elected as a Member of the Seimas in the rural electoral constituency of Kaunas, and on 25 November 1996 he was elected as the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

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You truly are one of the great statesmen of Europe. Back in 1990, when you were Chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania, you showed tremendous courage and vision in guiding your country to independence through turbulent times. In the years that followed you played a key role in helping Lithuania achieve membership of NATO and the European Union. Vytautas, your staunch commitment to our shared values to freedom and democracy is an inspiration for us all.

From the congratulation of Anders Fogh Rasmussen,
NATO Secretary General, 15 October 2012

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Vytautas Landsbergis, first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania and Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas, sign the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania in the Presidium Hall of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas (currently the Constitution Hall)

Vilnius, 6 November 1992

Photo by Andrius Petrulevičius (personal archive)



Heads of State of the three Baltic States: Vytautas Landsbergis, Ivars Godmanis and Edgar Savisaar visiting the White House in the United States.

US President George H. W. Bush welcomes the Head of State of Lithuania

Washington, 8 May 1991, photo by Kęstutis Jankauskas

Vytautas Landsbergis' personal archive

In the 2000 election, Landsbergis won a seat in the Seimas for the fourth time and continued working in the Seimas delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Baltic Assembly until 2004.

Between 2003 and 2004, Landsbergis was an observer at the European Parliament subsequently working as the full Member of the European Parliament in 2004–2014. At the European Parliament, he joined the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and served as a member of the Bureau of the Group, member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, substitute member of the Committee on Legal Affairs, and the Vice-Chair of the delegation for relations with the South Caucasus.

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Being the founder of the Lithuanian independence movement Sąjūdis and the first Head of State after the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, you played a crucial role in making history of your country.

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2012

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For his service to Lithuania, Landsbergis received the 1st Class Order of Vytautas the Great (1998), Badge of a Resistance Participant from the Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees (1998), Order of Vytautas the Great with the Golden Chain (2003), Dr Antanas Razma Award from the Lithuanian Foundation in the USA (2004), the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize (2011), and the Grand Cross of the Order of the Cross of Vytis (2012).

The political and public activities of Landsbergis have been acknowledged on the international scale. He was awarded the Norwegian People's Peace Prize, the prize of the French *Fondation du Future*, the prize of the International Freedom Foundation in the UK, and the Cross of Merit by the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (1991); the medal of the Hermann-Ehlers-Preis of Germany and the Medal of Merit of the Republic of Estonia (1992); 9th Ramon Llull Foundation Prize for promotion of the Catalan culture (1994); Saint Sebastian's Order of German Riflemen (1995); 2nd Class Order of the Legion of Honour of the French Republic (1997); the Italian *Testimony* prize by Vibo Valentia for contribution to the liberation of Lithuania and the Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit (1998); the Grand Cross of the Order of the Republic of Poland, the UNESCO medal for the contribution to the development of democracy and



Lithuania joins the United Nations. Vytautas Landsbergis, first Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania and Chairman of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas, celebrates the victory by solemnly hoisting the Lithuanian National Flag
New York, 17 September 1991, unknown photographer
Vytautas Landsbergis' personal archive

the fight for human rights, Grand Cross *pro Merito Melitensi* of the Order of Malta, Grand Cross of the Order of Honour of the Hellenic Republic, and the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (1999); the *L'ordre de la Pléiade de la Francophonie* of the French Republic (2000); 2nd Class Order of the Three Stars of the Republic of Latvia (2001); First Class Order of Merit of the Cross of Terra Mariana (2002); Constitutional Medal of the German Federal Land of Saxony (2003); the Robert Schuman Medal (2005); the European Medal of Charles IV (2007); the Grand Cross of the Knight of the Order of Oranje-Nassau of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2008); St. George's Order of the Republic of Georgia (2009); and the Grand Cross of the Order of Legion of Honour of France (2016).

FREEDOM PRIZE

The Freedom Prize is an award given by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania under the *Law on the Freedom Prize* of 15 September 2011. It was established to mark the 20th anniversary of the Soviet aggression against the independent state of Lithuania; to honour the memory of the victims who died for Lithuania's freedom in 1991; to stress the need to further promote the development of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equal cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. The Prize is awarded to individuals and organisations in recognition of their achievements in and contribution to the defence of human rights, development of democracy and fostering of international cooperation for the cause of self-determination and sovereignty of nations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Candidates for the Freedom Prize are selected by the Freedom Prize Commission. Its composition is approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the nomination of the Seimas Committee on Human Rights. The Freedom Prize Commission consists of one member per each political group of the Seimas and two members per each of the following bodies: the Commission of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian World Community, the Club of Signatories to the Act of Independence, and the Lithuanian Youth Council. The Freedom Prize is bestowed upon the candidate selected by the Freedom Prize Commission by passing the Seimas resolution to that end.

The value of the Freedom Prize stands at EUR 5,000. The Prize is awarded annually at a solemn ceremony at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 13 January, the Day of the Defenders of Freedom. During the ceremony, the winner is awarded with a diploma and the Statuette of Liberty by Joana Noreikaitė. The statuette is modelled after the Freedom Monument, a symbol of Lithuania's statehood, designed by sculptor Juozas Zikaras. The Freedom Monument was unveiled in Kaunas, the then temporary capital, during the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the independence of Lithuania in 1928. It was demolished in the period of the Soviet occupation, and restored and solemnly unveiled on 16 February 1989, when the national revival began.

WINNERS OF THE FREEDOM PRIZE

The Freedom Prize 2011 was awarded to Sergei KOVALEV, active fighter for freedom and democracy, human rights activist and Russian dissident.

The Freedom Prize 2012 was awarded to Antanas TERLECKAS, political prisoner, participant in the resistance to the Soviet occupation, founder and head of the Lithuanian Freedom League.

The Freedom Prize 2013 was awarded to Archbishop Sigitas TAMKEVIČIUS S.J., political prisoner, founder and editor of the underground publication *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

The Freedom Prize 2014 was awarded to Adam MICHNIK, dissident, one of the leaders of the Polish opposition movement *Solidarity*, journalist and editor-in-chief of the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

The Freedom Prize 2016 was awarded to President Valdas ADAMKUS, one of the leaders of the *Santara-Šviesa*, the liberal civic organization of the Lithuanian expatriate community.

The Freedom Prize 2016 was also awarded to Vytautas LANDSBERGIS, President of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas acting as the Head of State of that time, and Signatory to the Act of Independence.



Sergei Kovalev
(2011)



Antanas Terleckas
(2012)



Sigitas Tamkevičius SJ
(2013)



Adam Michnik
(2014)



Valdas Adamkus
(2016)



Vytautas Landsbergis
(2016)

FREEDOM PRIZE COMMISSION

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (Chair of the Commission, Member of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrat Political Group);

Rimvydas Raimondas Survila (Deputy Chair, Signatory to the Act of Independence);

Juozas Baublys (Member of the Liberals Movement Political Group);

Petras Gražulis (Member of the Order and Justice Political Group);

Eugenijus Jovaiša (Member of the Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union Political Group);

Michal Mackevič (Member of the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance Political Group);

Aušra Maldeikienė (Non-Attached Member);

Antanas Mikalauskas (Member of the Board of the Lithuanian Youth Council);

Gediminas Kirkilas (Member of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group);

Jonas Prapiestis (Signatory to the Act of Independence);

Rita Tamašunienė (Member of the Commission of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian World Community);

Mantas Zakarka (President of the Lithuanian Youth Council).