

**Speech by Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis,
President of the Supreme Council-Reconstituent Seimas
at the sitting of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
dedicated to the 30th anniversary of 13 January 1991
and the Freedom Prize 2021 award ceremony**

The year 1990 was a crucial time as subjugated nations and re-established democracies stood up to break free from the Communist dictatorships, especially the grand one. Aptly described as an ‘evil empire’ by Ronald Reagan, the red empire of the USSR was the major long-term disaster in Europe. Today, it would be even fairer to see it as the empire of lies and the state of notoriously open cynical violence, wars and occupations. Unfortunately, it stayed that way up until now.

The Soviet Union was under control by the conglomerate of the KGB and the clique of the Soviet Union Communist Party. Although the KGB gang formed part of the army, in fact it was the one behind the control and command of the army. The objective of the KGB, or rather that of army generals, spies and terrorists, was to maintain Stalin’s conquests and not to lose ground beyond the borders under the Molotov Pact and the Potsdam Conference. According to this unofficial doctrine, the USSR had to be preserved with all the captured territories marked red on the map, and hence with the Baltic States, let alone Ukraine and Transcaucasia. While the plan was developed by Yuri Andropov, head of the Communist Party and KGB, during the final period of the USSR, it was his disciple, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was entrusted with camouflaging the mission.

Lithuania had its own historical mission to accomplish – to break this doctrine of deceit and violence. The red empire of lies started crumbling in Lithuania. Lithuania was the first among the Soviet colonies where the liberation movement *Sąjūdis* won the parliamentary elections and the people’s authorised representatives unanimously declared a re-established independent state. This gave rise to a new democratic society that was developed in ways different from the dictatorial order imposed by the Soviet invaders with self-proclaimed and self-appointed superiors. Once these superiors were in place, the logic that was followed was very clear: I am the boss, and you are a fool (Rus: *ja nachalnik, ty durak*).

Lithuania was no longer willing to listen to the ideas coming from the towers of the Kremlin, because they were pushed forward by an angry fool. ‘You may take care of yourself as you want, but we are not your estate and serfs, we will live according to the order of free nations, which is democracy’. Lithuanians made it clear that they were people for themselves, rather than for the Kremlin, and that their supreme power rested with a free nation, which appointed temporary government officials. One of them was elected under the Provisional Constitution of the re-established sovereign country as a supreme state official. He was the one to propose, to the Parliament, the Lithuanian Government and senior judges for approval, to represent

Lithuania in international affairs, and to sign laws adopted by the Parliament called the Supreme Council. These laws were no longer imposed by the ruler's orders from the alien Moscow. That was what it meant to be independent. Independence was unacceptable for the oppressors, and it had to be fought for from the very first days starting with the joyous 11 March 1990. Last spring, this day marked its 30th anniversary.

The empire was frustrated; it tried to break us through intimidation and punishment, but failed. The day came, however, when the Soviet Union sent its troops against the independent Lithuania. This happened in January 1991, culminating on the night of 13 January, when unarmed Lithuanian citizens defending their freedom confronted the alien army, its tanks, bullets and explosives. Unarmed defenders of freedom and their leaders survived, while the attackers choked on their own bile.

This was our victory at the Battle of Vilnius. We fought it for the freedom of many nations. That is the short account. Thank you.
