

ОГЛЯДИ

Костицький В. В., доктор юридичних наук, професор, заступник Голови об'єднання народних депутатів України І скликання «24 Серпня»

ПИТАННЯ СУВЕРЕНІТЕТУ (ДО 35 РІЧНИЦІ ПРОГОЛОШЕННЯ НЕЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ ЛИТВИ ТА ІНШИХ БАЛТІЙСЬКИХ КРАЇН)

На запрошення Голови Сейму Литовської Республіки Сауліуса Сквернеліса делегація народних депутатів України – членів об'єднання народних депутатів України І скликання «24 Серпня» у складі Василь Костицький (керівник делегації), Олександра Барабаша, Івана Зайця, Василя Руденка, Миколи Поровського, Миколи Шведенка взяли участь у святкуванні 35 річниці проголошення незалежності Литви. У заходах також брали участь Президент Литви Гітанас Науседа, Голова Верховної Ради України Руслан Стефанчук, керівники Парламентів Литви, Латвії, Естонії, Польщі, Фінляндії, Ірландії. В рамках святкувань відбулася Міжнародна науково-практична конференція «Відновлення, сьогодні і майбутнє». На конференції виступили відомі державні і політичні діячі Балтійських країн, Президент Клубу Сигнаторів (Депутатів Парламенту Підписантів Акту про незалежність Литви Біруте Валіоніте, Дайніс Іванс (Голова Народного Фронту Латвії), Алар Мааренд (Заступник Голови Верховної Ради Естонії), Василь Костицький (народний депутат України І, ІІ, ІІІ скликань). У свої доповідях учасники конференції окреслили проблеми відновлення незалежності Балтійських країн та України, питання сучасної архітектури Європи, розвитку демократії та захисту прав і свобод людини і громадянина. Однією із найважливіших проблем, яка піднімалася практично усіма учасниками конференції, стало питання захисту територіальної цілісності та суверенітету України від російської воєнної агресії.

Надалі надаються виклади доповідей учасників конференції, які виявили бажання опублікувати ці доповіді та переслали їх до редакції журналу «Соціологія права».

Birutė Valionytė, President of the Club of Signatories to the Act of Independence of Lithuania

The issue of sovereignty of Lithuania and other post-Soviet countries in the modern dimension

Exactly 35 years ago, the second sitting of the Supreme Council of the 12th convocation of the LSSR was held here in this hall. At 5.15 p.m., the Supreme Council adopted, by a roll-call vote, the Declaration on the Powers of the Deputies of the Supreme Council of the LSSR, which reads as follows, 'On their own free will, the people of Lithuania gave to the elected deputies of the Supreme Council of the LSSR the mandate to represent the nation and obligation to restore the State of Lithuania and express the sovereign power of the nation through the Supreme Council, which, from 6 p.m. on 11 March 1990 onwards, shall be called the Supreme Council of Lithuania'. The Supreme Council then adopted the Law on the Coat of Arms and the Name of the State and the Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania. At 10.46 p.m., the case of return of the Independent State of Lithuania to the global map was opened. The Supreme Council then adopted the Act on the Restoration of Validity of the Constitution of Lithuania of 12 May 1938 and the Provisional Basic Law, and appealed to the nations of the world in the hope of their fraternal solidarity and support.

In Moscow on 15 March, the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR adopted a resolution declaring the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania illegal and invalid. A total of 1 463 deputies of the USSR voted in favour of this resolution, with 98 votes against and 128 abstentions. Support for Lithuania's independence within the USSR was weak. The independent Lithuania was supported though by a great number of people. Meanwhile, the governments of the world remained silent.

On 18 April, the Kremlin launched an economic blockade against Lithuania, and, on 26 April, the Republic of Lithuania received a letter from François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, and Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, stating the following, '[...] we want discussions between you and the Soviet leaders to begin as soon as possible, so that the current crisis ends in a solution that is acceptable to all sides. It would no doubt be appropriate to suspend for a certain time the consequences of the decisions your parliament has made, so as to make these discussions easier'. We can hear similar rhetoric being used now when the US is trying to bring Ukraine and Russia to the negotiating table. It has always been the case of the strong dictating their terms to the weak. But if the weak have a clear objective and a sturdy backbone, and the government and the people work together, the weak can be the victor. When the USSR carried out its aggression in Vilnius on 13 January 1991, almost the whole of Europe was outraged, but not a single government recognised Lithuania's independence. And that was something that we were particularly looking forward to. The world remained

silent, and only the Althingi of a small country of Iceland was not intimidated by the empire of the USSR and decided to establish diplomatic relations with us on 11 February 1991. Lithuania will never forget this. Thank you, Iceland. It was only after the failed putsch in Moscow, when the Russian Federation recognised the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, that the case of Lithuania's return to the map of the world was closed. It has to be said that we were also able to re-establish our state because it coincided with the end of the Cold War. The totalitarian USSR, with its mystical theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the construction of communism, suffered a complete fiasco. Lithuania escaped from the prison of the peoples of the USSR in good time. At that time Lithuania was a tough and very uncomfortable nut to crack for the Kremlin and the world. And the Lithuanian people made excellent use of the historical chance and restored their state.

What does this not too distant 35-year-old history tell us? Firstly, it reminds us that it is the Lithuanian nation that is the sovereign in all matters of the state of Lithuania, and, secondly, that there is nothing constant and unchanging. But today the word 'nation' has disappeared from the lexicon of our politicians. It appears that the security guarantees in which we had so much faith have begun to erode. It is clear that today the world is witnessing a redistribution of powers and spheres of influence. It has come as a surprise to everyone that a major strategic partner is reviewing its own interests and giving priority to business interests. There have been many signs that this would happen, but the EU and our politicians have ignored them. We have lost a lot of valuable time. The defence of our freedom is first and foremost our own concern, and the security of our state depends to a large extent on the mobilisation and readiness of our people to defend their freedom. Hence, we can really rely only on our own strength. Politicians have kept saying that NATO's Article 5 will protect us and that we are safer than ever, but the clouds of uncertainty and concern are once again gathering in the skies over Lithuania. An arms race is brewing around the world. Where does Lithuania stand in this whirlwind of change, and who are the true partners of Lithuania's security? The diplomacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was once well known and heard throughout Europe. It is time for Lithuania's leaders to realise that high-level diplomacy and its effective functioning are more important now than ever. So much has been said about leadership, and yet we remain behind closed doors. It is time to realise that the value of a high-ranking diplomat is huge, and it is inexcusable when appointments of this stature become a tool in political party battles.

The war in Ukraine has been going on for 12 years now. Thousands of people have died, and the war in the middle of Europe is only widening. Were Europe and the US such powerless partners that they could not have stopped Russia's aggression at the very beginning? Were economic interests placed above human values and international obligations? The reality is that the day has come when the US, our strategic partner, has declared, without respect for any diplomatic norms, that Europe's security is its own business. Ukraine used to be a nuclear state. It acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 16 November 1994. Under the Budapest Memorandum, the nuclear powers, namely the Russian Federation, the US, the UK, China and France, undertook not to threaten or use military force or economic coercion against Ukraine. The question is then, what are international commitments worth today?

The pacifist policies pursued in Europe for the last three decades have demonstrated their disability. Unfortunately, peace is about the balance of powers. For several years now, people have been living under the threat of war. Getting ready to defend one's own country is not incitement to aggression. There is a great deal of anxiety now in particular. And when does one become anxious? That happens when there is uncertainty. And what has the government done to reduce this anxiety? As far as I am concerned, I see a clear lack of understanding and inaction on the part of the authorities. It is high time to take action to create a reliable system of self-defence and information and to start practical training. Developing a mobile app would be important, yet not enough. Only a citizen who has mastered the basics of self-defence is able to make a sober assessment of the emerging situation and not go into panic. I often hear that even distributing leaflets is considered scaremongering. On the contrary, it is doing nothing that spreads anxiety and panic.

We must have a very concrete plan of action and the citizens of the country must be aware of it. We must now act very swiftly.

I am an optimist by nature, and I believe that the Lithuanian people will have the wisdom and strength to preserve their freedom. I wish the government of all levels, elected by the citizens of Lithuania, the wisdom and staying cool-headed in dealing with the vital issues of the state, and the realisation that the government is only strong when it turns its face to the common man and when it speaks to the people and hears them. It is then that society defends its government because it trusts it.

I hope that only the most important issues for Lithuania, and not those imposed from the outside, will be on the agenda of the country's supreme parliament. It is a politician's duty to clarify everything in principle on his own and to present a clear and concrete decision to the public, rather than promoting oneself and causing distrust and irritation in society.

The family and the school are the key institutions of a nation. I hope that our schools will nurture a Lithuanian citizen and a patriot, rather than a cosmopolitan man of the world. We have plunged headlong into globalisation without even weighing up what it actually means for a numerically small nation. It is not convenient to talk about ethnicity today, because it seemingly encourages nationalism and hatred in the country. For a numerically small country like Lithuania, however, ethnicity comes as a necessity. The card of anti-Semitism is constantly being played and used as a political gambit. This is a very dangerous path to follow in such an unstable time. Lithuania has always been a multi-ethnic state, where Lithuanians and Jews, Karaites and Tatars, Belarussians and Russians, and Poles have coexisted harmoniously for centuries.

This is now the second decade that we have been educating the people of the world. We no longer need to invoke the history of our country, which is as much great and inspiring as it is sad. We have reached a point where there is no longer a coherent history of Lithuania taught in school. Instead, the history of the state of Lithuania is taught as part of world history. And what has been the result of this? Well, the result is that pupils' knowledge of history has diminished, history has become uninteresting and incomprehensible, and this does not encourage patriotism in young people. The backbone of a nation is a strong society, with a strong family at its heart, one that knows its roots, has a historical memory, and cherishes its mother tongue. The Lithuanian language, traditions, customs and state symbols are the cornerstones of the Lithuanian nation. Our parents and great-grandparents died defending Lithuania, bearing the Lithuanian symbols of the Vytis, the Columns of the Gediminids, and our Tricolour Flag. I understand that for the younger generation, born in the independent Lithuania, the symbols cherished by their parents may seem old-fashioned. But what does the 13th of January have in common with the forget-me-not flower, which, as a symbol, is very ambiguous? On 13 January 1991, young people, defending their freedom, stood against tanks and died carrying the Vytis, the Columns of the Gediminids and the Tricolour Flag, too. Let us honour their memory and the values they stood for. The symbols of the state have a deep meaning and carry a strong emotional and spiritual charge. Perhaps, not all of us think about this. After all, the Vytis and the Columns of the Gediminids originated in the old times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and our Tricolour Flag represents the spirit of the 16th of February, 1918. Let us cherish them, because they are part of Lithuania's identity, and they will definitely help us not to get lost in today's political highways. So, happy 35th anniversary of the restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania.

Aleksandras Abišala, Signatory to the Act of Independence of Lithuania; Minister without Portfolio from 1991 to 1992; Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania in 1992

Democratisation of society in Lithuania and the activities and international relations of the Lithuanian Reform Movement *Sąjūdis* as an umbrella organisation

What I am going to say is my personal understanding of the processes of that time from the present perspective. This will not be part of historical memory, because memory is a capricious thing. Nor will this be memories of how I felt and thought back then.

Let us start with the words 'umbrella organisation' that is in the title of my speech. According to a definition from the management point of view, it is an organisation that controls or organises the activities of several other organisations, all of which have a similar purpose. Most often they are created from bottom up, when several interest groups create an umbrella organisation and delegate some of their powers to it, such as the power of representation, organisation of joint activities, achievement of common objectives, and, sometimes, joint policy-making. The examples would include the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the Lithuanian Basketball League, and even the European Union. Occasionally, an entity becomes an umbrella organisation when it creates (or seizes) subordinate organisations, giving them greater or lesser autonomy, be it real one or seemingly real. The examples of such organisations would include some corporations, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the USSR itself.

Sąjūdis neither developed nor functioned as such an 'umbrella' organisation. After all, the Lithuanian Freedom League, the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, the Lithuanian Helsinki Group, and the *Atgaja* Movement with the Rock March (with due respect to them) did not gather to establish *Sąjūdis* as an umbrella organisation. *Sąjūdis* also did not create any subsidiary organisations, even though its people contributed to the establishment of the Club of the Exiled or the restoration of the Rifleman's Union.

The other words contained in the title of my speech are 'Lithuania', 'society' and 'democratisation'.

The initial title did not read 'Lithuania'. It contained the abbreviation 'LSSR'. The few, but far from all, previously mentioned public organisations that operated before *Sąjūdis* did not belong to the LSSR. They were the organisations of Lithuania (although not yet restored) that acted either secretly or by ignoring the LSSR. I doubt whether the word 'democratisation' was the most important one in their (and later in *Sąjūdis*) vocabulary. Rather, the most important word to them was 'Independence'. The concept

of democracy is very broad, for even Gorbachev stated that he wanted a more democratic USSR. Of course, when we dreamed of a free Lithuania, we imagined it as a democratic country. However, the key word here is society. The Latin word 'civitas' means 'a community of the citizens', that is to say, a responsible, organised and autonomous part of the population. I will continue to use the word 'Society' in this sense only. It is clear that what used to be even in Roman times, and up until 11 March 1990, still holds true today: not all people belong to a Society.

Sajūdis can be called an umbrella organisation in the sense that it sought to mobilise the whole Society (civitas) to fight for an independent democratic state of Lithuania. Although *Sajūdis* did not control (and did not want to control) organisations pursuing the same goal, it nevertheless supported and assisted them as much as it could and provided backup ('umbrella') to them. Although, truth be told, some sparks flew with the Lithuanian Freedom League, the Union of Lithuanian National Youth, and some dissidents. However, it must be acknowledged that those more radical organisations were the ones that pushed *Sajūdis* to be more decisive.

Now let's turn to the organisation itself. We will never be able to know the exact number of registered members of *Sajūdis*. The Wikipedia reports that there were 180 000 members, but according to my estimates, the number reached roughly 200 000. Not so long ago, I talked to a good friend of mine who said that he considered himself a member of *Sajūdis*, even though he was not a 'registered member'. However we make the estimations, *Sajūdis* had 5–7% of the then population of Lithuania in its ranks, which was a lot. The Communist Party of the LSSR had about 200 000 members. Of course, some of the members of the Communist Party were also part of *Sajūdis*, and this did not seem strange, at least until the 1990 elections.

Since the election of its Initiative Group on 3 June 1988, *Sajūdis* had started to awaken and mobilise the Society. The Initiative Group was, perhaps, more intuitively than consciously, made up of people well known to and respected by the Society. In the absence of online social networks or good access to the then channels of information dissemination, it was critical for the Society to learn about and accept the new organisation. Not all members of the Initiative Group later became politicians, while some switched sides. However, they did a very important job by loudly proclaiming the establishment of the movement. That public trust led to the rapid growth of *Sajūdis* ranks not only in Vilnius, but throughout Lithuania. *Sajūdis*' groups had been formed even before the establishment of the organisation itself, without any regulations, defined policies or goals. Only later did some encouragement for the initiative occur. The leaders of *Sajūdis* in Vilnius, Kaunas and other major cities would help to establish new groups. Although these groups were somehow called *Sajūdis* support groups, as if they were some external supporters and not part of *Sajūdis* itself. Like all Soviet 'public' organisations established by the government from 'working environment teams', *Sajūdis*' groups were being mostly formed in companies and organisations. As Kęstutis Bartkevičius writes in his book *Kelias į nepriklausomybę* (Engl. *The Road to Independence*), *Sajūdis* found it easier to establish itself in places where the signs of a Lithuanian Society already existed, such as in a variety of ethnographic, ecological, cultural and other non-Soviet gatherings. In those gatherings, people learned to come together and act immediately without being instructed by the government.

The structure of *Sajūdis* was largely completed after its Congress in October 1988 when the *Sajūdis* Seimas and its Council were elected, and city and district councils were formed. Information dissemination (even on television), coordination and planning of activities improved and, finally, from an almost spontaneous movement, *Sajūdis* became a powerful democratic organisation.

One of the key features of democracy is elections, the transfer of certain powers to elected institutions, decision-making by majority vote, and freedom of debate (speech) for both the elected people and the Society as a whole. During the 50 years of the occupation, nothing like that ever happened, so *Sajūdis* and the Society needed to learn. I can personally testify that the learning process was very intensive and not only in the *Sajūdis* Seimas and the *Sajūdis* Council, but also at lower levels of the organisation, i.e. in city and district councils and *Sajūdis*' groups. A rather unique democratic structure, namely, the meeting of mandated representatives of *Sajūdis*' groups, emerged in Kaunas. The Kaunas Council was accountable to it. The meeting of mandated representatives would discuss important issues and adopt the decisions proposed by the Council or the meeting itself. Decisions submitted by the Council were not always adopted, and the Council would comply. It is important to mention that the meeting was not only a decision-maker, but also a key information channel, as the mandated representatives would inform their group members about the meetings. The Society, albeit not directly involved in *Sajūdis*' activities, but aware of its democratic form, felt that democracy was working.

It is generally known that in the beginning the name of the organisation was the Reform (Perestroika) Movement of Lithuania. I think the tactics of not talking about achieving independence straight away was the right one. Not only because of very likely repression, but also in order not to frighten the Society too suddenly. I know for sure that the Society had not yet been ready for a decisive fight. Therefore, the first steps of *Sajūdis* (regardless of the formal objectives of the initiatives) were aimed at mobilising the Society and preparing it in political terms, especially when talking about Lithuania by making references to its

history, language, culture, and nature and by demonstrating how the Soviet occupation sought to erase these features of the nation and the state. Through *Sajūdis* press and television and during the major rallies and the *Sajūdis* Congress, it was possible for the Society to remember and understand what its legitimate heritage was and who was to blame for its undermining.

The Society also realised that they had the tools to repair the damage. Those instruments included protests, rallies, petitions and, ultimately, general elections, with the strong support to those who would do what was needed to be done on behalf of the Society.

The time after the Congress was dedicated to the development and consolidation of the organisation itself and to the mobilisation and education of the Society. However, the most important process involved swaying that part of the public which did not really feel like belonging to the Society. Those people could have been called the neutrals or the hesitants, or referred to in any other way. I think the hardest thing was to convince the neutrals not that it was worthwhile to regain independence, but that it was possible to do so.

I am convinced that the Baltic Way was a turning point. *Sajūdis* (and the members of the Baltic Assembly and the popular fronts of Estonia and Latvia) took great risks. After all, if the Society had not gathered for the Baltic Way and contributed to it, defeat would have been irreparable. However, the Baltic Way had become the largest political demonstration in history. The objective then was already clear and undeniable, and it was the independence of Lithuania. The Society had mobilised itself and shown determination to pursue this objective, and a large number of the neutrals had also contributed. The Societies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had shown themselves and the world that 'we can when we have a goal' and 'we can when we act together'. Like the landing in Normandy on 6 June 1944, the Baltic Way, albeit not a final victory and, perhaps, not even the biggest battle, became undoubtedly a turning point in the war for independence.

A lot had changed since the Baltic Way, with the direct opponent of *Sajūdis* being no longer the 'subservient government' of the LSSR, but Moscow, finally realising where the processes in the Baltic States were leading to. The local Communist Party had to choose sides. And they chose to secede from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and later vote in favour of the Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania, although, befittingly, their opinion fluctuated until the last minute. Meanwhile, from a movement of a Society, *Sajūdis* ultimately became an opposition party (although it did not call itself that way).

The Society confirmed its decision in the elections of February 1990 and, once again, on the night of 13 January 1991. The plebiscite of 9 February 1991 is undeservedly forgotten, because that was when 90 % of the 85 % of those who participated in it said 'yes' when asked whether they were in favour of the state of Lithuania being an independent democratic republic. The statement put up for the plebiscite was later enshrined in Article 1 of the Constitution of Lithuania. It seems to me that such huge turnout and decisive self-determination was the Society's response to the murderers of 13 January 1991.

Naturally, the international activities of *Sajūdis* primarily involved Estonia and Latvia, i.e. the countries with a similar fate. The Baltic Assembly was the most important formal platform for that cooperation, although the cooperation took place even before its establishment in May 1989. The Polish *Solidarność* was both an important historical partner and a teacher of resistance. I believe that the main motive for working with these countries was to build a common front against Moscow. Contacts were also maintained with East German and Czechoslovak movements. Cooperation (mainly on education) with the societies of the republics of the USSR was also important in seeking their understanding and assistance for Lithuania's cause. Notable activities also involved the progressives of Russia, especially after 13 January 1991, and later after the failed August putsch in Moscow when Yeltsin came to power.

The role of the particularly important cooperation with the Lithuanian diaspora is also worth mentioning, but that merits a separate discussion on another occasion.

Alar Maarend, Deputy of the Supreme Council of Estonia; Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Commission

Estonia's road to restoring the independence of its state

Until 1917, Estonia was divided between two governorates – the Estonian Governorate, which included Northern Estonia along with the island of Hiiumaa, and Southern Estonia along with the island of Saaremaa, which belonged to the Livonian Governorate. After the February Revolution, Estonian national circles began to seek the unification of areas populated by Estonians with the Estonian Governorate. On March 30, 1917, the Russian Provisional Government approved a decree merging the Estonian territories of Livonia with Northern Estonia, establishing the Autonomous Estonian Governorate. Already on May 23, 1917, elections were held for the Temporary Land Council of the Estonian Governorate.

Following the October Revolution and the attempts of the Bolsheviks to seize power, on November 28 (November 15 in the Julian calendar), the Land Council declared itself the highest authority

in Estonia. Thus, the legitimate representation of the people defined itself as the bearer of higher power in Estonia. This was a decision of the political self-determination of the people. From a constitutional law perspective, the Estonian state was born from the decision of the Land Council on November 28, 1917. There is broad consensus in constitutional law that the primary characteristic of statehood is the question of power. In addition, the legitimacy of the authority that decides on power, or the mandate to represent the people wishing to politically define themselves, *de facto* capability to assert themselves on their territory, and international recognition of statehood are essential. The subsequent political steps were legally necessary for Estonia but essentially organizational. Establishing practical power was, however, complicated and challenging, due to Russian and German military intervention and fierce resistance from local left radicals.

Still we celebrate Estonia's Independence Day on February 24th. On February 19, 1918, the Estonian Salvation Committee was formed. Estonia's statehood was in need of salvation. A manifesto of Estonian independence was drafted, which was read aloud in Pärnu on February 23, and in Tallinn, also in Paide and Viljandi, on February 24, by future president Konstantin Päts. With this manifesto, Estonia was officially declared an independent state for the first time. However, the Estonian flag flew atop Toompea Tower for just one more day, as German forces captured Tallinn on February 25. The decision to celebrate February 24 as Independence Day was made on February 12, 1919.

In 1987-1988, there was a resurgence of social and political activism among the Estonian population. The Soviet regime reduced public terror against dissenters and politically active individuals. On August 23, 1987, the first large-scale spontaneous demonstration against Soviet rule took place in Tallinn, attended by 3,000 people. They demanded the disclosure of the secret protocols of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact from 1939 and the restoration of the independence of the Baltic states. On September 26, 1987, four economists proposed in the newspaper "Edasi" to transition the entire Estonian SSR to full self-management, effectively preparing for Estonia's economic independence.

On January 26, 1988, the Presidium of the Estonian SSR Supreme Council adopted a decision regarding public assemblies, protests, street marches, demonstrations, and other events. This decision, interestingly, made it possible to avoid the formation of a special militia unit OMON in Estonia.

On April 13, 1988, Edgar Savisaar proposed the creation of the People's Front in a live TV broadcast, naturally in support of perestroika. From April 14 to 17, 1988, Tartu Heritage Days took place, during which Tartu students took to the streets under the long-banned colors of the Estonian flag – blue, black, and white, which waved separately as fabrics. On June 16, 1988, the hated first secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, Karl Vaino, was replaced by Vaino Väljas. On the same day, the blue-black-white Estonian flag was raised in the Rakvere castle tower before thousands of people. It remained there waving.

On July 23, 1988, the Estonian Christian Democratic Party was established as the first independent party in Estonia, though its activities remained modest.

On August 20, 1988, the Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP) was founded, which was the first to publicly express the idea that a national party was needed in Estonia to take power away from the communists. The ERSP's programmatic goal was the restoration of the Republic of Estonia based on legal continuity, on the restitution principle. It represented the radical wing of the national independence movement and employed anti-communist rhetoric. On February 24, 1989, the ERSP, together with the Estonian Heritage Society and the Estonian Christian League, initiated the movement of Estonian citizens' committees, culminating a year later in the elections of the representative body of the legal citizens of the Republic of Estonia, the Estonian Congress, on February 24, 1990, and its convening on March 11, 1990. The main aim of the Estonian Congress was the restoration of the Republic of Estonia by its legal citizenry based on legal continuity. The Estonian Congress saw itself as the highest authority in Estonia, holding legitimacy as it was elected by the *de jure* existing citizenry of the Republic of Estonia.

On October 1-2, 1988, the founding congress of the Popular Front of Estonia took place in Tallinn. At the end of October, a plan was released in Moscow to initiate amendments to the Soviet Constitution that would centralize power to such an extent that it would strip the union republics of even the formal right to withdraw from the USSR, leading to an active wave of protests in Estonia and a collection of signatures against it.

On November 16, 1988, an extraordinary session of the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR took place, during which two acts of special significance were adopted. First, the constitution was amended to state that all forms of ownership, including personal, private, and mixed property, belonged to the economic system. Most importantly, a declaration of the sovereignty of the Estonian SSR was adopted, declaring that Estonia held the highest power on its territory through its supreme legislative, executive, and judicial bodies. The sovereignty of the Estonian SSR is complete and indivisible. Thanks to Vaino Väljas, the first secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, who was elected to chair the session, the sovereignty declaration, which angered Moscow and surprised the world, was adopted with 258 votes in favor, 1 against and 5 abstentions.

The Acts of November 16 in Estonia were the first legislative step of a republic against the central authority of the Soviet Union. Everything was completely legal, juristically correct, and in accordance with the laws and constitution of that time. In Moscow, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR tried to declare these acts partially invalid on November 26, but they had already come into effect.

On May 13-14, 1989, the first Assembly of the Baltic Independence Movements took place in Tallinn. Essentially, the Popular Front, Tautas Fronte, and Sajudis decided to aim for national independence. A powerful joint demonstration became the Baltic Way, which stretched from the foot of Toompea in Tallinn to the Gediminas Tower, where more than a million people joined hands to demand the annulment of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and freedom for the Baltic peoples. In 2009, the Baltic Way was included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

It is relevant to note that this event was watched with great interest and anxiety in other countries, especially in Central Europe. In Poland, there was a government crisis, and then-president General Jaruzelski waited five days to see if the Soviet Union would disperse the Baltic Way with military force, and when that did not happen, he appointed one of the leaders of Solidarity, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, as the head of government. Poland was the first of the Moscow satellite states where the government began to be led by a prime minister who was not a member of the Communist Party.

On November 17, 1989, a new electoral law for the Estonian SSR's Supreme Council, consisting of 105 members, was adopted. It also stipulated that four single-mandate electoral districts would be created for the military units located on Estonian territory—army, navy, air force, and border guard, or KGB. It can be noted that this compromise had a quite significant and weighty role in terms of information exchange during the events of the August coup in 1991 when communicating with the Russian troops stationed here.

On December 24, 1989, the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union condemned the secret additional protocol of August 23, 1939, and other secret agreements made with Germany, declaring the secret protocols legally unfounded and invalid from the moment of signing. This was a historically significant victory.

In northeastern Estonia, the proportion of non-Estonian residents was very large, with Estonians making up about 20% of the population. In January, calls began to form an independent state entity in Northeast Estonia. This type of pressure and threat continued even after the restoration of independence.

On March 18, 1990, elections were held for the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR, where 81 Estonians, 20 Russians, and 4 representatives of other nationalities were elected. Of the elected representatives, 73 represented pro-independence forces and 27 imperial-minded forces.

Estonia now had two representative bodies that were elected and began operations. The Estonian Congress, elected by the *de jure* citizens of the existing Estonian Republic, declared itself the only legitimate restorer of the state power of the Estonian Republic and stated that matters concerning the state and international legal status of the Estonian Republic fell under its exclusive competence.

The Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR was elected by the population within the existing legal system. Nationalists feared that the representation elected in this manner would not be able or willing to restore Estonia's independence based on legal continuity. The rivalry was strong, posing a threat of serious political confrontation between Estonian-minded forces.

The Supreme Council began its work on March 29, 1990, and on March 30, it adopted a decision on "The state status of Estonia," confirming that the occupation had not interrupted the existence of the Estonian Republic *de jure*, declaring the restoration of the Estonian Republic and a transition period. A declaration on cooperation between the Supreme Council and the Estonian Congress was also adopted.

Intensive work followed to change the Estonian legal system, carry out economic reforms, and prepare for and implement currency reform.

On May 8, 1990, a decision was made to name the state the Republic of Estonia, and the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR became the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia.

During the August coup in 1991, the Supreme Council convened on August 19 to declare the independence of the Republic of Estonia, but it wasn't until August 20 at 23:04 that a decision on "The state independence of Estonia" was adopted with 69 votes in favor. During this time, critical discussions and negotiations took place with representatives of the Estonian Congress regarding the wording of the declaration of independence.

It was decided to:

Confirm the state independence of the Republic of Estonia and seek the restoration of diplomatic relations for the Republic of Estonia.

Establish a Constitutional Assembly for the development of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and to present it for a referendum, with the composition to be determined by delegation from the Supreme Council and the Estonian Congress.

Conduct parliamentary elections for the Republic of Estonia in accordance with the new Constitution during the year 1992.

The Constitutional Assembly began its work on September 13, 1991.

The new Constitution came into effect on July 3, 1992.

On September 14, 1992, the Supreme Council disbanded and ceased its activities.

The VII Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia began its work on October 5, 1992. The Republic of Estonia was restored.

Zita Šličytė, People's Deputy of the USSR; Member of the Special Commission of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR for the Political and Legal Assessment of the Treaty of Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939 between Germany and the USSR; Deputy of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania; Member of the Commission for National Defence and Home Affairs and the Ad Hoc Commission for Drafting the Constitution, Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania

Joint action by the USSR People's Deputies from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to recognise the Molotov-Ribbentrop Secret Protocols as null and void from the moment of their conclusion

It had already been the fiftieth year since the start of the Second World War. A war that had manifested itself in the most serious of crimes against humanity, such as genocide, repeated acts of dehumanisation, and occupation, partition or liquidation of sovereign states.

What were the causes of the second global armed conflict? What led to it? Was it only the fascist Germany that was responsible for the bloodshed, suffering and losses of hundreds of millions of the affected by that horrendous war?

In 1948, the British intelligence found the microfilms, later dubbed the 'Von Loesch collection', from German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's personal archive in Japan. Among the thousands of documents filmed were the secret and confidential protocols signed by the foreign ministers of Germany and the Soviet Union, whose names were used to refer to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

These documents recorded the boundaries of the so-called 'spheres of interest' of Germany and the Soviet Union stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, from Finland to Bessarabia.

The original documents, along with other German archives, were destroyed in the fires of the war, and the Soviet Union vehemently denied their existence, calling the microfilms as forgeries of the intelligence services.

Hitler's criminal collusion with Stalin to divide Europe into 'spheres of influence' became a significant propaganda weapon for the US and other Western democracies in the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Your Excellencies,

On 26 March 1989, the first democratic elections were held in the Empire, plagued by political and economic stagnation, though ruling one sixth of the world. A total of 2 250 People's Deputies of the Soviet Union were elected. The minds and hearts of most of them were burning with passion for moral politics, for the end of the arms race, and for universal peace, truth and justice, freedom and democracy.

The policy of 'perestroika' (restructuring) and 'glasnost' (openness) proclaimed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, reached its culmination in April 1989 during the First Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow. The Congress criticised the abuses of centralised rule, the dictatorship of the Communist Party, and restrictions on human rights. Academician Andrei Sakharov, an icon of the Russian democratic forces, would constantly take the stand at the rostrum.

Through the concerted efforts of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian People's Deputies, the Congress set up a Special Commission, which was tasked with the political and legal assessment of the Treaty of Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939 between Germany and the Soviet Union. I was elected as a member of the Commission together with twenty-six other People's Deputies.

At the Commission's first meeting on 5 June, academician Georgy Arbatov asked the following, 'Why are we doing this now? Will this be used to justify the withdrawal of the Baltic States from the Soviet Union and the new partition of Ukraine and Moldova?'

Marju Lauristin, People's Deputy from Estonia, replied with the following, 'It is necessary to identify the legal, political, moral and ideological aspects and their impact on the present.' Meanwhile, Igor Grāzin added that 'it must be pointed out that the secret protocols are still in force and we are still living in the 'sphere of interests'.'

The Commission's subsequent work was subject to active attempts to delay and even terminate the investigation.

The initiative was then taken by Edgar Savisaar, the leader of the Popular Front of Estonia and Vice-Chairman of the Commission, who would organise additional meetings of the Commission and seminars with historians, lawyers and politicians on the premises of the Estonian Permanent Representation in Moscow.

Since the Commission did not possess the original secret protocols, the first task was to verify the authenticity of the copies.

Academician Endel Lippmaa, an Estonian member of the Commission, would bring to the meetings a 30 kg heavy bag with documents indirectly corroborating the secret agreements. In the bag, he would find the relevant document in seconds and would cite it in Russian, English and German.

NEMO NOCENS SI INFITIARI SUFFICIT (There would be no criminals if not confessing was enough)/

Thus, Lev Bezymenskii, a political commentator for the magazine *Novoye Vremya* (The New Times), carried out an expert examination of the secret protocols and refuted their falsification. Among the most convincing arguments was the fact that the text of one of the protocols was printed in large print on the so-called 'Führer's typewriter'. Hitler was short-sighted and disliked reading with glasses.

After a hard day's work on 19 July 1989, the Commission adopted the following two important conclusions:

1. Although the original secret protocols had not been found, the reliability of the copies was beyond doubt.

2. It was necessary to adopt a special act declaring all the secret agreements between Germany and the USSR for the period from 1939 to 1941 null and void from the moment of their signature.

In response to the Commission's request to make the texts of the secret protocols public, the newspaper *Pravda* (Truth) published the 1940 declarations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania proclaiming their incorporation into the Soviet Union.

This outrage enraged the national liberation movements of the Baltic republics. On 23 August 1989, the Estonian and Latvian Popular Fronts, together with the Lithuanian Reform Movement *Sąjūdis*, organised a spectacular demonstration called the Baltic Way.

A living chain of two million people stretched 650 kilometres from Vilnius through Riga to Tallinn in protest against the Soviet Union's occupation of the sovereign states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940 and their insidious incorporation into the USSR.

The Baltic Way campaign was a powerful support and endorsement of the efforts of our Commission. Your Excellencies,

A draft Resolution on the Political and Legal Assessment of the 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty, signed by 19 members of the Commission, was submitted to the Second Congress of the People's Deputies for consideration, and the fierce opposition from the critics of the Resolution was overcome by a second vote. The Resolution was adopted on 24 December 1989. I call it a Christmas miracle.

I quote paragraph 5 of this Resolution:

'The Congress states that in both their preparatory method and content, the 23 August 1939 Protocol and other secret protocols that were signed with Germany in 1939–1941 were deviations from the Leninist principles of Soviet foreign policy. From the standpoint of law, territorial division into Soviet and German spheres of interest and other actions were in conflict with the sovereignty and independence of several third countries.

The Congress notes that during this period the relations of the USSR with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were regulated by a system of treaties. Pursuant to the 1920 Peace Treaties and the 1926–1933 Non-Aggression Treaties, the signatories were obliged to honour each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability under any circumstances. The Soviet Union had assumed similar obligations to Poland and Finland.'

The highlight of the Resolution is its paragraph 7, which states that the Congress 'condemns the fact of signing the secret protocol on 23 August 1939 as well as other secret agreements made with Germany' and 'declares the secret protocols legally unjustified and invalid from the moment of signing.'

Although the Resolution does not specify the consequences arising from it, there is no doubt that, from a common-law point of view, the situation as it existed prior to the secret protocols must be restored and the victims must be compensated for the damage suffered as a result.

The citizens of the Republic of Lithuania voted in favour of this in a referendum on 14 June 1992, and the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the Law of 13 June 2000 on Compensation of Damage Resulting from the Occupation by the USSR. Unfortunately, the negotiations on this with the Russian Federation, as the successor of the rights and obligations of the Soviet Union, have not even begun...

Thank you for your attention.

Vasyl Kostytsky, Deputy Chairman of the Association of People's Deputies of Ukraine of the first convocation "August 24", Doctor of Law, Professor, Academician of the National Academy of Legal Sciences of Ukraine, Professor of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

Historical, political and legal components of independent statehood of Ukraine

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Chairman of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Mr. Saulius Skvernelis, the Signatories Club and the President of the Club, Ms. Berutė Valionyte, for this invitation to take part in the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence. I would like to convey to the representatives of the Signatories Clubs of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia my greetings and gratitude for their constant support of our freedom, greetings to the Parliament of Lithuania, the Lithuanian people from Ukrainians, the Association of People's Deputies of Ukraine of the first convocation, which we called "August 24" – the founders of the modern Ukrainian state, from the Association of People's Deputies of Ukraine.

Your holiday today is our common holiday of freedom, because freedom is the content of our life both for society and for a person. A person is born free, the Almighty grants him an immortal soul, and for a society of free people – the Moral Imperative, which the Holy Scripture transmits to Christians through the 10 Commandments of God, to Jews – through the 627 rules of the Torah, to Muslims – through the 72 rules of the Quran. Free people endowed with freedom by the Almighty create a democratic state.

The history of our peoples is the history of the struggle for freedom. It was the feeling of freedom that determined the almost synchronous restoration of independence in 1990, first of Lithuania, other Baltic states, and Ukraine. But the countdown of our independent statehood begins much earlier. Having created, following the example of the Lithuanian Friends of the Association of Parliamentarians of the first convocation "August 24", at the constituent assembly on January 21 of this year, we adopted a Declaration in which we answered for the present and future generations that on August 24, 1991, the Parliament of Ukraine, by adopting the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine, restored the thousand-year history of independent statehood of Ukraine, which we have been leading since Kyivan Rus and the Galicia-Volyn State, the Lithuanian Principality of the 14th and 15th centuries, the Ukrainian Cossack State of the 16-17th centuries, and the Ukrainian People's Republic of the early 20th century.

Yes, we still had attempts to preserve our state tradition, not only quasi-statehood in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, but having won the right to Galician autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century, having created the Western Ukrainian People's Republic and the Hutsul Republic in 1918-1919, the Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Republic in 1918, Carpathian Rus' in the middle of the 20th century, and other regional attempts to restore independent statehood of Ukraine, which were unfortunately destroyed by the aggressors during the world wars.

Ukrainian scientists deeply study our common history from the times of the Lithuanian-Ruthenian state, reflected in the Lithuanian Chronicle of the 15th century, the legal ideas of which allowed us to unite our state-building traditions and create Lithuanian statutes, according to which our peoples lived for years. Today we can recall the "Russkaya Pravda" by Yaroslav the Wise, and the "Praise of Grand Duke Vytautas" (1428-1430), a prince revered by his neighbors: the Polish king, the German emperor, the Moscow prince, the Tatar khans, the Moldavian master. Our scholars draw attention to the fact that this work appeared long before Machiavelli's "The Prince" as a new wave of secular state Renaissance management, which differed from the "Instructions of Prince Volodymyr Monomakh of Kiev" of the 13th century, focused on religious problems of power.

The adoption of the Sudebnyk of Casimir IV Jagiellon (1468) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – a collection of laws as a transition to a unified nationwide codified law, an early modern image of law as a guarantor of social justice – was a turning point for the further development of both Lithuanian and Ukrainian legal thought.

That is, the methodological foundations for building an independent Ukrainian state were laid over centuries through the formation of the philosophical, legal and historical tradition of Ukrainian statehood from the Kyivan Rus' state to the Ukrainian People's Republic of the 20th century, and the restoration of Ukraine's independence was preceded by hundreds of years of difficult, bloody struggle of the Ukrainian people.

The weakened empire of the Soviet Union in 1990 could no longer stop the development of national liberation movements, so in the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, representatives of national democratic forces managed to win a significant number of seats and form an opposition in Parliament, the People's Council, which included more than 100 people's deputies of Ukraine, whose influence on the course of political events was very significant. The members of the People's Council were prominent political figures who had spent decades in Soviet prisons, in particular, Levko Lukyanenko, Vyacheslav Chornovil, Mykhailo and Bohdan Horyn, and Henryk Altunyan.

The work of the Parliament began on May 15, 1990. And already on July 16, 1990, the Parliament adopted the draft Declaration on the State Sovereignty of Ukraine prepared by the People's Council, which laid down the Program for the Restoration of Independent Ukrainian Statehood.

Later, the Parliament established the priority of the Constitution and laws of Ukraine on the territory of Ukraine, abolished the dominant role of the Communist Party, adopted the Law "On the Economic Independence of the Ukrainian SSR", turned enterprises and systemic banks located on our land into the property of Ukraine, created the National Bank of Ukraine, and refused by a constitutional majority of 345 votes to approve the so-called "updated Union Treaty" prepared by Moscow politicians.

The aforementioned actions of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the first convocation gradually created the political and legal basis for the restoration of independent Ukrainian statehood and the creation of a modern sovereign state of Ukraine, which was legally formalized as a result of the adoption on August 24, 1991 by a constitutional majority of votes of a historical document – the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine in accordance with our responsibility to God and the Ukrainian people, the embodiment of the eternal dream of the Ukrainian people about an independent state, for which the best sons and daughters gave their lives.

In the All-Ukrainian referendum scheduled by the Parliament for December 1, 1991, 84.18% (almost 32 million) of citizens took part, of whom 90.32% (28.8 million) voted "for" the support of the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine, including more than 54% of voters in Crimea and 57% in the city of Sevastopol, which in turn confirmed the legitimacy of the Act of Proclamation of Independence by the Parliament and became the key basis for the rapid international legal recognition of Ukraine by the absolute majority of countries in the world.

After the declaration of independence, in the extreme political conditions of that time, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine became the leader of state-building processes in Ukraine, laid the political and legal foundation of national state-building, adopted a number of legislative acts related to the institution of citizenship and the establishment of the rule of law and the priority of human rights, political and ideological diversity, market economy, social policy, the development of all institutions of an independent state, taking into account the millennial traditions of Ukrainian state-building, approved amendments to the Constitution and historical state symbols – the State Flag of Ukraine, the State Emblem of Ukraine, the musical version of the State Anthem of Ukraine, and formed the Constitutional Commission.

Separately, it is necessary to say about the Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of November 18, 1993 "On the ratification of the Treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States of America on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms, signed in Moscow on July 31, 1991 and the Protocol thereto, signed in Lisbon on behalf of Ukraine on May 23, 1992", according to which the reduction of strategic offensive nuclear weapons was envisaged, with the fact that in accordance with the "Vienna Convention on the Succession of States..." 64% of the carriers and 58% of the nuclear warheads were to remain in Ukraine.

Thus, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, having received a mandate from the Ukrainian people in the 1990 elections, and confirmation of the legitimacy of its activities in the All-Ukrainian referendum of 1991, performed the function of the Constituent Parliament of the Ukrainian state, which was taken into account in the work of the next convocation and found its embodiment in the Constitution of Ukraine, which defined the model of Ukraine as a modern state, because the modernity of the state is determined not by its place on the map or globe, but by other signs: we legally secured the establishment of an independent, legal social democratic state, in which the highest social value is a person, in which the principles of separation of powers and the rule of law operate.

Therefore, in the 1996 Constitution, we legally enshrined the creation of an independent, legal social democratic state, in which the highest social value is a person, and his rights determine the content and direction of the activities of a state responsible to a person, in which the principles of separation of powers and the rule of law operate, and the Ukrainian people are not only the source of power and the bearer of sovereignty, but also the subject of power, which allowed us to talk about rethinking Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers, which after 300 years requires improvement and the search for new channels of people's participation in the exercise of power – not only through elements of direct democracy – elections and referendums, and not only through a system of representation monopolized by political parties, but also involving other subjects of civil society – professional public organizations, their exclusive right to participate in the formation of control and supervisory authorities and the formation and exercise of attestation authorities.

As a result of the adopted subsequent amendments to the Constitution, Ukraine declared its desire to return *de jure* to the European community of peoples and states and become a member of NATO. The Kremlin tried to stop the European choice of the Ukrainian people with a war that caused great sacrifices and destruction and became a test not only for us, but also for Europe and the world as a whole.

This war has been going on for 11 years since 2014, we all need to understand the nature of this war, which is not just a struggle between the totalitarian regimes of Russia and democracy in Ukraine, it is an attempt by Russia to absorb Ukraine in order to take revenge and restore its status as the first state in the world, and to do this, to reset Russian relations with the United States, trying to use the trust of the American authorities against the strengthening of Europe and the independence of Ukraine, which

is necessary for stability in the world. But we understand what a great danger for Europe is hidden here, since Russia does not fulfill its contractual obligations, and in such cases, imperialism cannot be allowed even to the periphery of civilized Europe.

Today, this is a war with imperialism for democracy and freedom not only in Ukraine, but also in Europe and the world, a war in which civilized peoples and more than 140 states have come to the defense of Ukraine, providing us with invaluable assistance, primarily our neighbors the Baltic countries, Poland, the member states of the European Union, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. We are infinitely grateful for this assistance. Ukraine bears the greatest burden of this war for freedom and democracy, for which we paid with tens of thousands of victims and great environmental destruction, which gave grounds to speak not only of genocide, but also of ecocide directed against the Ukrainian people.

But the threats have already crossed the borders of Ukraine and become a European problem. Today, it is clear to us, the founders of the independent Ukrainian state, that the issue of ending the Russian war in Ukraine cannot be resolved without Ukraine and Europe, just as the issue of European security cannot be resolved without Europe and Ukraine.

We remember, that civilized peoples and more than 140 states stood up for Ukraine, providing us with invaluable assistance, primarily our neighbors the Baltic countries, Poland, the member states of the European Union, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. The war brought us great sacrifices and destruction, 25-30 percent of the territory was struck and mined, more than 7 thousand environmental crimes were committed, environmental damage was caused in the amount of more than almost 73 billion euros, and total destruction in the amount of 800 billion dollars, as informed by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky.

Ukraine bears the greatest burden of this war for freedom and democracy, for which we paid with tens of thousands of victims and great environmental destruction, which gave grounds to speak not only of genocide, but also of ecocide directed against the Ukrainian people. Today, international experts concluded that environmental threats have already crossed the borders of Ukraine and are becoming a problem for Europe and the countries of the Black Sea basin, and Europe and the world will suffer economic losses by 2026 as a result of environmental pollution and environmental crimes committed by the Russian army against Ukraine in the amount of tens of billions of dollars.

In conclusion, I want to say that every Ukrainian lives with a sense of gratitude to you for your help and hope for Victory, our common Victory for our children and grandchildren so that our children and grandchildren can speak as we do today, as people of freedom in free countries: Glory to Ukraine, glory to Lithuania. Let Freedom and Democracy prosper!