



Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

Pils laukums 3, Rīga-50, LV-1900, tālr. 7092122, fakss 7320404,
prese@president.lv, www.president.lv

Address by H. E. Vaira Vīke-Freiberga, President of Latvia, at the National Armed Forces' parade in Riga, 18 November 1999

Most honourable Independence Day guests,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen!

As Commander in Chief of Latvia's National Armed Forces, I greet our officers and soldiers on the 81st anniversary of our country's declaration of independence and on our army's 80-year anniversary!

Our nation's representatives declared Latvia's independence on the 18th of November in 1918, and in so doing expressed their political will. But only after a bitter struggle with bloodshed and casualties did it become possible to feasibly secure Latvia's territorial integrity and to consolidate its sovereignty.

An independent Latvia could never have emerged and existed, had her fearless sons not been willing to put their lives at stake and fight for the freedom of their native land. During the Second World War, Latvia's men fought just as bravely and selflessly, only this time their courage and bravery was tragically exploited by forces hostile to the interests of Latvia. Brother was forced to fight against brother, and in the end our land was taken by a foreign power.

But now, in a renewed and free Latvia, our armed forces can again serve the people's democratically elected civil administration and provide security for our nation and its inhabitants. They can provide security not only during war, but also in peacetime. The duties of our armed forces include not only an obligation to defend Latvia, but also the responsibility to take part in international peacekeeping activities. Our soldiers' professionalism, state of readiness and responsibility is relied upon, both in their own country, and by civilians whose security has been threatened in places affected by lengthy conflicts.

Latvia's officers and Latvia's soldiers! I wish you strength and endurance in fulfilling your duties. I wish you success and progress in improving, developing and perfecting Latvia's army. It is up to you to ensure that Latvia's army entirely fulfils Latvia's requirements, and that it can join up with international forces quickly and effectively.

Your country and your President expect the best that you can offer. We rely on your courage and determination. We rely on your virility. Latvia requires a strong, reliable and modern army. Latvia requires stately and dashing soldiers, the kind of men and women our nation can be proud of. Stand bold and brave in guarding our nation!

God, bless Latvia!