



Latvijas Valsts prezidents

Dedication of the Holocaust Victims' Memorial in Liepāja

Honorable Guests!

You have all gathered here today in the Liepāja Jewish Cemetery, to remember and honor the memory of the people who were exterminated in the Holocaust. The Memorial Wall built here will serve as a cenotaph for the more than 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. This memorial will be an eternal reminder, a witness of the horrible crimes that were committed in Liepāja and environs during the Nazi occupation. The victims' as well as the rescuers' names on the Wall testify that alongside cruelty and evil there also was alive humanitarianism and brotherly love.

This will be a reminder of the great tragedy that struck the Jewish community not only of Liepāja but of all Latvia during the Second World War. It will be a warning of the dangers of evil, urging people always to be alert, and to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring.

Today, standing here at the memorial site for the victims of Nazism, it is important for everyone to understand and evaluate the events of that time. What madness and hatred had seized people that caused them to destroy thousands of innocent fellow men? Clearly, in a democratic state, as now is Latvia, one must openly, honestly, and forthrightly speak about one's past; know it and reevaluate it. To ensure that the events of the Nazi occupation of Latvia never happen again, there are important steps we must take: reject prejudices and intolerance among peoples, ban ethnic hatreds, and condemn expressions of antisemitism in any form whatsoever.

I fully share the hope of the Memorial project's authors that Latvia henceforth will be a country where all ethnic groups work together in friendship to build a prosperous, stable country.

The sacred Jewish book, the Talmud, says that one is truly dead only when all memory of one's existence has been lost. The Memorial built here testifies that the living do remember the dead and guard their memory.

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Today, at the dedication of the Memorial Wall, I want to thank the Liepāja Holocaust Memorial Committee, its chairman Mr. Edward Anders, Mr. Vladimirs Bāns, the authors of the project, and all who lent a hand to make this Memorial become reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga".

*Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga
President of Latvia*

9. June 2004.