



LATVIJAS VALSTS PREZIDENTS

Speech of President of Latvia Raimonds Vējonis at the Latgale Centenary Congress in Rēzekne on 5 May 2017

Dear Madam Speaker of the Saeima,
Dear Prime Minister,
Distinguished Members of the Saeima, Dear Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have started the celebrations to mark the centenary of our country, Latvia. We begin these celebrations in Latgale. Today in Rēzekne, we celebrate and commemorate the Latgale Congress. Here, a hundred years ago it was decided that we all are one people and we can have only a shared future. The Latvians from Latgale joined the Latvians from Vidzeme and Kurzeme into one nation and destiny communion. Only as a united nation, we were able to claim our country. Only together, we were strong enough to succeed.

The Latgale Congress gave our people confidence in themselves and strength for the future. A hundred years ago, here the prayer of our nation sounded with unflinching confidence, “God bless Latvia”. Here we proudly said, “Acknowledging the Latvians living in Vitebsk province and Kurzeme and Vidzeme people as the one Latvian people, we decided to join the Latvians from Kurzeme and Vidzeme.”

The torch of faith lit at the Latgale Congress led us off to the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918 and the victory during the Latvian War of Independence culminating exactly after the liberation of Latgale.

At the Latgale Congress, we learned to be united and to trust each other. We learned that great deeds could be done by searching for common that united rather than divided and split. The Latgale Congress reminds us that Latvia became possible when we thought more about the future of all the people rather than the benefit of our own parish or county. If everybody had searched for the best individual future, most likely we would not have had our own country. United for Latvia is the message of the Latgale Congress, which is also carved on the Monument of Latgale’s Māra.

Dear people of Latgale,

Often we are used to saying that Latgale is the third star in the coat of arms of Latvia. Actually, I feel that Latgale is the first star that kindled at the Congress in Rēzekne in eastern Latvia to notify the beginning of Latvia. Latgale is the soul and conscience of our Latvia.

I know that huge patriots of Latvia live and work in this region, who foster Latvian identity and statehood. You have always been able to keep your faith, language, and Latvian posture. You have always been for Latvia. Magnificent spiritual power, hospitality, and openness characterise Latgale. The Latgalian language is one of the crucial roots of the Latvian language and common treasure of our Latvia. Let us be proud of that and work together to preserve this treasure. The people living in

Latgale can move heaven and earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I would like to emphasise the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the spiritual revival of the people, especially the outstanding contribution of its most renowned representative, the Member of the Saeima and pastor Francis Trasuns when organising the Latgale Congress. Francis Trasuns fought for a strong and united Latvia man and boy trying to overcome regional disparities, to reduce the mutual burden of resentment and prejudice. He always emphasised and defended democratic values.

Francis Trasuns once claimed, "Everybody in Latvia is one united people that Latvia would stand firm against external enemies as a single man from whatever place it might come". One hundred years have passed when many storms have gone over our land and people, but our Latvia still remains strong and united.

Let us be proud of ourselves and of Latvia! Let us strengthen our national self-confidence, let us always appreciate our culture, traditions, and belonging to our people and country!

We all share single, holy, and dear Latvia. Let us do our best for Latvia!

God bless Latvia! God bless Latgale!