

The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “Lithuanian Ancestry Message, 1976” of the Eliska Hasek Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 26, 1976

TO AMERICANS OF LITHUANIAN ANCESTRY

As we celebrate the birth of freedom in America, more and more of our people are mindful of their bi-national heritage. Your Lithuanian-American activities call attention to the remarkable efforts of millions of talented and hard-working individuals from all over the world who built America into the great nation we know today.

I am keenly aware of your great anxiety concerning your homeland, families and friends who have been and are still profoundly affected by East - West political developments in Europe. Last summer, just before departing for Helsinki, and before that in February of 1975, I met with your leaders to discuss these concerns and to emphasize that the accord I would sign in Helsinki was neither a treaty nor a legally binding document.

The Helsinki agreements, I pointed out, were political and moral commitments aimed at lessening tensions and opening further the lines of communication between the peoples of East and West. I assure you again that there is no cause for the very understandable concern you raised about the effect of the Helsinki Declarations on the Baltic nations. The United States has never recognized the Soviet incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and is not doing so now. Our official policy of nonrecognition is not affected by the results of the European Security Conference.

It is the policy of the United States--and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life--to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe by every proper and peaceful means.

I commend you for your continued contributions to our national legacy and to our durable system of representative government. Today, I salute you for your struggle on behalf of all human freedom.

Gerald R. Ford

