

The Republic of Latvia, proclaimed on 18 November 1918, had lost its independence in the Second World War. The Soviet occupation continued after the end of the war, and the Latvian people were subjected to Soviet ideology, repressions, and Russification. However, the people's dream of freedom and their own country remained alive.

In the second half of the 1980s, as soon as the liberalisation of Soviet power and *perestroika* began, Latvian society started on the road to restoring its independence. This path is also known as the Third Awakening or the Singing Revolution.

During *perestroika*, Soviet authorities allowed for more freedom to express opinions that differed from the official ideological course of the Communist Party. New social organisations were formed, which were not subordinated to the Communist Party. People in Latvia made extensive use of these opportunities, engaging in a struggle against the perversions and consequences of the Soviet system, which threatened the existence of the Latvian language, culture, and environment. The Communist Party leadership's attempt to rebuild the Soviet Union opened the way for the oppressed peoples to break out of the "prison of peoples".

THE LATVIAN CULTURE FOUNDATION

Founded
12.11.
1986.

The Foundation, headed by the poet Imants Ziedonis, played an important role in awakening national culture and consciousness. It was actively involved in the campaign to preserve the banks of the Daugava River, advocating the preservation of the cultural and natural environment.

Became a pillar in the formation of the Popular Front of Latvia



1990: Chairman of the Latvian Culture Foundation and Member of the Supreme Council Imants Ziedonis. Photo: Boris Kolesnikovs Saeima photo collection

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CLUB

Founded
28.02.
1987.

A striking example of the club's activities is the campaign against the construction of the metro in Riga. Had these plans come to fruition, a large workforce would have been imported in Latvia, and Latvians would have become a minority in their own country. The club also organised widespread events to protest against the construction of the Daugavpils hydroelectric power plant and a nuclear power plant near Liepāja, as well as the operation of the Sloka pulp mill, which polluted the Baltic Sea.

Actively organised anti-Soviet mass events



27 April 1988. Protest rally against the construction of the Riga metro, organised by the Environmental Protection Club in Arcadia Park. Latvian National Museum of History collection

Founded
08.10.
1988.

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY GROUP “HELSINKI-86”

Founded
10.07.
1986.

Already in 1987, members of this group dared to organise actions to expose the crimes of the Soviet regime. The laying of flowers to commemorate the victims of Soviet-organised deportations, the public condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the call to celebrate the proclamation of Latvia on 18 November were acts of great courage. The "Rebirth and Renewal" movement, started by Lutheran clergymen, worked in close cooperation with the so-called Helsinki-86.



14 June 1988. March to the Cemetery of the Brethren in Riga following a public rally at the House of Political Education (now the Congress Hall). Konstantīns Pupurs, member of the group "Helsinki-86", carries the red-white-red flag through Riga for the first time. Saeima photo collection

Shed light on the crimes of the Soviet regime against the Latvian people

LATVIAN NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT (LNNK)

Founded
10.07.
1988.

The LNNK aimed to stop migration from other Soviet republics because it was destroying Latvia's cultural environment and threatening the preservation of Latvian traditions. The LNNK organised rallies to condemn the crimes of the Soviet regime and clearly put forward the demand for national independence.



7 October 1988. At the People's Manifestation "For a Lawful State" at the Great Open-Air Stage in Mežaparks, the crowd is addressed by representatives of the Popular Front of Latvia, the Latvian National Independence Movement, other movements, and public figures. The people openly and loudly voice their demand for Latvia's self-determination and greater autonomy. Latvian National Museum of History collection

Was the first to bring the idea of an actual restoration of national independence to the forefront

THE POPULAR FRONT OF LATVIA (LTF)

The Popular Front of Latvia initially advocated the democratisation and liberalisation of power within the framework of the reforms proposed by Gorbachev. However, in October 1989, the Popular Front decided to move towards the full restoration of Latvia's independence through parliamentary means. Led by Dainis Īvāns, journalist and leader of the National Awakening movement, the LTF not only engaged in the political process, but also organised the society to fight for the country's independence.

Became the driving force behind the restoration of national independence through parliamentary means



7-8 October 1989. Second Congress of the Popular Front of Latvia. A new programme is adopted, setting out the Popular Front's political course towards the full restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia. Latvian National Archives collection

Photo: Valters Ivanovs

