23 AUGUST 1989 · 19:00

The Baltic Way

Two million people. 675 kilometers. Fifteen minutes.



2 million — people

675 km — from Tallinn to Vilnius

15 min — hand in hand, from 19:00

On the 50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, about two million people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined hands in one human chain from Tallinn through Rīga to Vilnius. For fifteen minutes they stood together to draw the world's attention to the secret deal that had led to the Soviet occupation of their countries. Within two years, all three had restored their independence.



Between Cēsis and Valmiera, Latvia, 23 August 1989.

TIMELINE

1918	Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declare independence.
1939	The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. A secret protocol places the Baltic states in the Soviet sphere.
1940	The Red Army occupies all three countries.
1941, 1949	Mass deportations to Siberia.
1987	First public protests on the anniversary of the pact.
1989	23 August: the Baltic Way. In December, the USSR admits the secret protocols existed.
1990–1991	Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia restore their independence.
2009	The Baltic Way's documents enter UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

Fly the whole chain in 3D

baltikett.valevlaube.com

Route approximate, following today's roads. Map: Natural Earth (public domain). Photograph: Wikimedia Commons. A Lab project by Valev Laube.