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On 23 August Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania commemorate the 20th anniversary of The Baltic Way. On that day in 1989 the people of the three occupied Baltic States joined hands in an unprecedented action - a 600 km-long human chain from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius - demanding recognition of secret clauses in the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 and the re-establishment of the independence of the Baltic States.

The leader of the Lithuanian independence movement, S?j?dis Vytautas Landsbergis MEP (EPP), stated: "The Baltic Way, the magnificent event of 23 August 1989, was both a commemoration and a demonstration. Around two million people joined their hands in a live chain from Vilnius to Tallinn via Riga, commemorating the tens of millions of victims of the Stalin-Hitler conspiracy, which began the Second World War 50 years before. They also expressed their will for the war to end and demanded peace and freedom in the last captive Baltic nations: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This came very soon. A way was opened for the others under Soviet captivity as well. No surprise, then, that the Berlin Wall crumbled."

Sandra Kalniete MEP (EPP), who was a deputy Chairwoman of the Latvian Popular Front, said: "The Baltic Way was a powerful demonstration of solidarity among European nations, a quality that is very much needed in these times of uncertainty and economic downturn. I hope that the lessons of 1989 will inspire Europeans to meet the challenges of 2009."

"The Baltic nations today call on all EU member states to assess and unequivocally condemn the morally and politically disastrous results of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. In light of the April 2009 European Parliament resolution on totalitarianism, we call on EU governments to mark August 23 every year officially as a day of remembrance for all victims of totalitarian regimes. The liberation of Soviet-occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania started on August 23, 1987 with the citizens' quest for the truth about the secret protocols of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. This truth should become the common legacy of all citizens of Europe. Only in this way can we prevent such tragedies from happening again in the future," concluded one of the main activists in the Estonian Popular Front, Tunne Kelam MEP (EPP).

The Baltic Way was a phenomenon that showed how three small countries, regardless of their unique national characters, created a cross-national spiritual synergy for a common goal - to overcome the consequences of World War II and to destroy totalitarian regimes. It resulted in the regained independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1990-1991.