

“For centuries, Lithuania and Estonia have stood on the same threshold. Our sorrows have been similar, but more importantly – so too have been our victories. After all, together, we have torn down the iron curtain erected to keep us physically, morally and cultural cut off from our European home,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said on Saturday, February 16th at the Defense Forces Parade organized in Vilnius on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Lithuania.

“Lithuania and Estonia have had common enemies and common oppressors, but more importantly – today in the European Union and NATO, we have common friends,” said the Estonian Head of State. “We both have multiple times been forced to prove our right to exist. Prove to ourselves and to rest of the world. And we have done so, we have done so magnificently. Our forefathers have been brave, as have we too. We have every reason to be proud, to be proud of ourselves, to be proud of our countries. We have no reason for envy.”

Lithuania and Estonia, the Baltic countries in general, are strong allies, we have helped and supported one another in good times and bad, said President Ilves, recalling Jonas Jablonski, the author of The Lithuanian Grammar, who a century ago was persecuted by foreign authorities, but was able to work and teach in Estonia, amongst Estonians.

According to the Estonian Head of State, when we speak of cooperation today, we should refer to the revived Baltic Battalion, which will be part of the NATO strike force, the joint protection of Baltic air space after 2018, and the dangerous foreign missions where Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian soldiers are serving together.

“We have common concerns. Currently, the Baltic countries form an energy island, cut off from our European neighbours. For this reason, Estonia welcomes the decision taken by the Lithuanian parliament and President Adamkus to proceed with the new nuclear power plant project, as well as with power bridges to Poland and Sweden,” said the Estonian Head of State. “If these projects were not to be carried out, the Baltic countries would no longer be free in our economic decisions. Here, Estonia wants to be a trusted partner of Lithuania.”

Trust, solidarity, and co-operation in attaining our common goals are the keys to ensuring our countries' development, President Ilves stressed.

The Estonian Head of State visited Vilnius on February 16th at the invitation of Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, to participate in the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Lithuania. President Ilves also attended the formal concert at the Lithuanian National Opera and the dinner hosted by President Adamkus for heads of state and invited guests.

On February 17th President Ilves visited the Karmelava Regional Air Surveillance Co-ordination Centre near Kaunas.

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