

Sweden has left a permanent and visible mark on Estonian history, which is often recalled with pleasure, said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at a banquet, which took place in the royal palace of Stockholm to honour His Majesty, King Carl XVI Gustaf, and Her Majesty, Queen Silvia.

Centuries have been unable to smother the good breath of Swedish times in us, which brought about a major change in the mentality of the Estonian people over a one hundred and fifty year period, told President Ilves, in recalling the past.

The Estonian Head of State acknowledged the assistance that Sweden gave to the Estonians who built new homes in Sweden after escaping across the Baltic Sea at the end of World War II, as well as the Swedish support for the Baltic states upon restoring their independence and rebuilding their statehood.

“Whether we look from the eastern or western shores of the Baltic Sea, today we are living through the safest and most peaceful time in our history. For Estonia, the chance to enter this era became a reality thanks to very powerful support and the well-considered actions of our friends both near and far away,” President Ilves stated.

“The support of Sweden for Estonia’s integration with the European Union was outstanding in all spheres, but political and moral support were the most important: this support has given us a sense of security about the future, a future we can control ourselves, and we have used this security to rebuild our strong, secure, and free homes,” said the Estonian Head of State.

Today, Estonia and Sweden are good partners and supporters in the European Union, in promoting the Baltic Sea strategy and supporting the enlargement of the European and the integration of eastern partners; at the same time, Sweden helped Estonia to build up its national defence, we both are aware of the importance of cyber security, and the soldiers and civilian experts of both our nations are participating in military operations in Afghanistan, President Ilves said.

“Mr. Carl Bildt, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and one of my best friends in Sweden, has called

Estonia the economic tiger of Europe. Major investments made by Sweden into the Estonian economy have played a highly important role, which have supported the credibility of Estonian decisions in the eyes of the rest of the world, particularly during the beginning of the period of regaining independence. Estonia has confirmed, by the good condition of its public finances, the traditional understanding of responsibility and sustainable ways of thinking that are characteristic of the Nordic people,” said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves recalled how the last pre-war Estonian Ambassador in Stockholm, Mr. Heinrich Laretei, went to present his credentials to his Majesty, King Gustaf V, and, after the diplomat had said the first introductory words, the King pulled the credentials from him and said: “Let us dispense with ceremony; go to the window, take a seat, and we will have a nice chat“.

“In the very same way, without wasting time on excessive ceremonies, yet carried by real interest and trust, our relations are developing now, seventy-five years on. We are sitting and chatting, discussing everyday problems; we feel pleased with our success, and we can rely upon mutual friendship and face future challengers together. This is a foundation that will endure,” said President Ilves yesterday, at the banquet in the Stockholm Palace.

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