

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who arrived in Warsaw on a working visit, visited the Marshal Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek this evening together with Polish head of state Bronisław Komorowski. At the museum, the president inaugurated a memorial plaque dedicated to General Johan Laidoner, the distinguished commander of the Estonian forces during the War of Independence and the pre-war Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Army.

Almost a century ago, General Laidoner, as well as Marshal Piłsudski – two close friends – led the armed forces of their countries to victory against foreign enemies, which formed the bases for our independence.

President Ilves recalled that Estonia and Poland are united by the colours of red and white, which were given to the City of Tartu by Stefan Bathory in 1584 and which also became the national colours of Poland.

"Along with our common history, as physical symbols and bonds, Estonia and Poland are united by the fates of two people whose lives also reflect the fate of our peoples and nations in the 20th century," President Ilves said about Johan Laidoner and his Polish wife Maria Kruszkowska. "This brave woman found a second homeland for herself in Estonia and shared her husband's tragic fate until the end. Estonia became her final resting place. Maria Laidoner said the following: "My husband was my joy and my misfortune. If anyone should speak of me, they should say that I loved my husband very much. Nothing else is important.""

According to the Estonian head of state, the last lines written by Johan Laidoner from prison are still important today: "People die. Nations do not disappear. Nations live on."

"The histories of Estonia and Poland are living proof of this. Despite repeated attempts to wipe our independent countries off the world map, it is the eradicators themselves that have disappeared into the obscurity of history," President Ilves said. He affirmed that today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we have one more important story to tell. "This is the story of the shaping of Europe's future, and Estonia and Poland, which share a sense of responsibility and common values, have the right to be heard in this regard."

The Estonian head of state affirmed that many people speak about a sense of responsibility when it comes to security, but much less responsibility exists in reality. "Estonia and Poland are among those countries that are truly responsible," said President Ilves.

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