

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and the President of Latvia, Andris Bērziņš, today in Viljandi welcomed guests to the Viljandi Folk Music Festival. The Estonian Head of State also accepted an exact copy from Latvia of "Terra Mariana 1186–1888", an album that weighs more than 50 kg, which was completed in 1888 and represents an account of the history of Livonia.

The luxurious original of the "Terra Mariana 1186–1888" album was presented by the Catholics of the Baltic provinces to Pope Leo XIII in 1888 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination. A cheaper and simpler public version of the album was published in 1903. The Latvians had ten exact replicas made of the original that is kept in the Vatican and the President of Latvia gave one of them to the Estonians today. The album contains illustrations, photos and texts from 1186-1888 that are dedicated to the history of Livonia (a historic region in the current territory of Estonia and Latvia).

President Ilves recalled that Viljandi where the two heads of state met today was also a part of historic Livonia that has connected Estonia and Latvia, Estonians and Latvians, for centuries. The visit of the President of Latvia to the Viljandi Folk Music Festival and the presentation of the album to the Estonians represent good examples of the close and secure personal relations between the two neighbouring countries.

The Estonian Head of State congratulated President Bērziņš for Latvia's final decision to join the euro area.

The presented album will be added to the collection of the National Library of Estonia and it can be viewed, from September to March, in the Art Museum in Kadriorg, at an exhibition entitled "When the Artist Met Clio. Historical Scenes from the 19th Century". The exhibition brings together paintings, engravings and drawings that were created and collected in Estonia and Latvia in the 19th century and depict history. One of the exhibition halls will be called Terra Mariana and this is where the album, given by the Latvians, will be exhibited.

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