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The 75th anniversary of the liberation of Flanders

President Andrzej Duda and his wife Agata Kornhauser-Duda on Sunday in Lommel, north-east Belgium, took part in ceremonies marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Flanders by the 1st Polish Armoured Division under Gen. Stanislaw Maczek. The president was accompanied by the head of BBN minister Paweł Soloch.



"The soldiers of the 1st Armoured Division fought for ours and your freedom, we hope that their sacrifice will not be in vain, that we will not disappoint their hope, that we will fulfil their will of freedom and peace," Andrzej Duda said.

The president observed that the soldiers contributed to victories in such major battles as Operation Overlord, Falaise and Mont Ormel, in France. He noted that on their way to the Netherlands and Germany, they liberated many Belgian towns. Following General Maczek's orders, they strived for their activities to involve the least possible loss among civilians and minimal damage to houses, churches, monuments and other material goods.

"They liberated, among other cities, Ypres, Tielt, Ruiselede and Ghent. General Maczek's soldiers emphasise in their recollections that it was in Belgium that they were met with special warmth and hospitality by their hosts," Duda added.

The ceremonies were also attended by the King of the Belgians, Philippe I.

The king noted that during the six years of WWII, over 6 mln Poles lost their lives, while 5 mln foreigners died in Poland at that time. People were decimated, the territory was occupied, and the political system devastated, he added. "Nevertheless your compatriots (Polish people - PAP) fought where it was possible. They established the largest resistance movement in occupied Europe, while outside the country, Poles formed various corpuses that took part in the greatest battles for liberation." Philippe I said.

Gen. Maczek's son and granddaughter also attended the ceremonies along with Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, head of Poland's National Security Bureau (BBN) Pawel Soloch and presidential aides Krzysztof Szczerski and Adam Kwiatkowski.

The First Polish Armoured Division under the command of General Stanislaw Maczek took part in the Allied invasion of Normandy and played an instrumental role in the battle of Falaise by circling the German 7th (Wehrmacht) Army and 5th Panzer Army. Later, its victorious battle route led through France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and ended with the capturing of the German town of Wilhelmshaven on May 5, 1945.

Source: PAP, own information

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