



Eesti Vabariigi Suursaatkond
Embassy of the Republic of Estonia
Oslo

Mr Terje Bartholsen
Mayor of Evenes

Our: No 1-11/12
Oslo, 7 May 2024

Honourable Mayor of Evenes,

Dear Terje,

I would like to take this opportunity and on behalf of the Estonian Embassy in Oslo express my gratitude and thank you and all Norwegians, particularly in Evenes and Lenvik, for keeping Estonia and Norway relationship permanent and strong in many ways. In today's world it is important to have strong relationship with alliances that you can count on. Therefore, I would like to emphasise also the importance of history and our historic ties, as an Estonian poet J. Liiv has said once "He who does not remember the past, lives without a future".

I know that there is a tradition, the Mayor of Evenes lays a wreath on the grave of one my countryman, Estonian Arnold Soinla, every year on the 8th of May. A. Soinla was an Estonian soldier, one of the twelve Estonian soldiers from the Winter War in Finland, who joined the Alta battalion in Norway. A. Soinla took part also in the battles for Narvik and was killed on May 20, 1940. Short before his tragic loss he wrote to parents: "Fighting for Norway against Germany is like fighting for Estonia against the Soviet Union."

On the tombstone of Arnold Soinla, it is written that he came from Estonia. Until Estonia regained its independence in 1991, this information in its way helped to remind of Estonia's existence as a country that was free and independent until 1940. I am truly pleased that our heroes who fought for our freedom have never forgotten also in Norway.

I am equally delighted that Mrs Hege B. Grundekjøn, Norwegian war historian, is working currently on the book project about the Estonian soldiers in Norway, and I am confident that soldier Arnold Soinla's story is one of those that is given in Estonian-Norwegian history book.

Once more, dear Mayor, please accept my gratitude for taking care of the grave of brave Estonian soldier on the same date every year, in order to mark the freedom day in Norway. Wish you and all Norwegian friends in Evenes and Lenvik lots of luck and happiness. Looking forward to enhancing the wide range of cooperation between our people and countries.

Kind regards,

Lauri Bambus
Ambassador of Estonia