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*Eesti Vabariigi Alaline Esindus OSCE juures
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia
to the OSCE*

Statement by Ambassador Triin Parts Permanent Representative of Estonia to the OSCE in response to the statement delivered by the Russian Federation

Permanent Council No 751

Vienna 26 February 2009

Thank You, Madame Chairperson,

As we had just a moment ago possibility to listen to the statement of our Russian colleague concerning my country - Estonia and its history, I would like to offer to you Estonian point of view on these matters.

On the eve of the 91 anniversary of the Republic of Estonia the President of the Republic shows his gratitude and appreciates by conferring with state decorations those individuals who have maintained, promoted and secured the independence of the Republic.

Named five gentlemen – Kirss, Laansalu, Põldre, Silla and Arras were among those, who were bestowed different state decorations by the order of President Ilves of 4 February 2009. The reason why they were bestowed decorations was their role in fighting for the independence of Estonia. On 21 June 1940, on the day of overthrow of the Estonian Government by the Soviet regime and on the day of the beginning of Soviet occupation 3 members of the Estonian battalion Kirss, Laansalu and Põldre showed an armed resistance to the occupying Soviet military forces, as they protected the premises of the Estonian battalion in Tallinn.

The fourth man - Priit Silla was detained in 1962 by Soviet powers for his so called "anti soviet" activities and for belonging to an anti-soviet organisation. For four years (1962-1965) he was a political prisoner and now he is active in the Union of Former Political Prisoners.

Vello-Johannes Arras was also a political prisoner who was sentenced for his beliefs and political activities. He participated in the fight against soviet occupation during his school years and belonged to an anti-soviet organisation. He was arrested in 1949 and he was sentenced for 10 years of imprisonment. Until 1956 he served his sentence in Vorkuta Retshnoi prison camp.

All 5 men were fighting for the independence of Estonia that was lost in 1940 for more than 50 years and they had plaid their role in fighting against the occupying powers.

The issue of occupation of Estonia is a question that we are not likely to come to a common understanding with our Russian colleagues here over the Permanent Council table. At the same time I am optimist that one day - sooner or later - this common understanding comes as the co-operation between Estonian and Russian historians is well advancing.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson