

Ukraine independence day

Maturing friendship overcomes distance, differences

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On the day when Ukraine celebrates the 18th anniversary of its independence, it is natural and useful to glance at the achievements of its history, even as short as it yet is. For a diplomat these achievements are first and foremost in the relations between his home country, and the nation where he represents it.



Looking at the 17-year history of relations between two countries as distant and different as Ukraine and Japan, some outside observers might wonder whether their relationship could ever be of any magnitude and significance. And that could be true in the not so distant past. But in our modern multifaceted and perennially changing world, ever more interconnected by modern communications, trade and political relations, even the nations lying in different parts of Eurasia find common grounds for active, and very realistic interchanges and ties.

At least this is the case of Ukraine-Japan relations, to which I have devoted more than six years of my life. That is why I am proud to share with the readers of The Japan Times my satisfaction with the fact that these relations today are filled with mutually beneficial transactions, exchanges and human contacts.

Remembering the beginnings of our friendship, I first of all recall Japan's very practical and timely assistance to Ukraine in such a vital field for our country as the alleviation of the aftereffects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Certainly, Ukraine, without

waiting for foreign aid, has borne the brunt of that tragedy by cleansing the radioactive waste, relocating dozens of thousands of people from the areas affected by radiation into safe areas, paying the costs of constructing new housing for them, etc. By our estimates Ukraine, Russia and Belarus have so far spent more than \$20 billion on Chernobyl-related expenses.

But at the beginning of the 1990s, when Ukraine, as well as all the other republics of the former Soviet Union, was reeling from "shock therapy," its economy devoured by hyperinflation running in thousands of percentage points and in need of help, Japan started providing funding for Chernobyl-related projects.

As readers might remember, in 2000, Ukraine fulfilled its commitment, pledged earlier to the Group of Eight and having spent more than \$150 million to improve their safety systems, and shut down the three functioning reactors at Chernobyl. But even before that, practically from the time when direct diplomatic relations were established, Japan volunteered to help. By now Tokyo has extended to Kiev almost \$25 million for a nuclear waste storage facility, \$55 million for Chernobyl's damaged fourth reactor "shelter," \$3 million for medical supplies through the International Red Cross and \$1.21 billion for scientific research projects at the International Chernobyl Center. Another \$6.4 billion were donated for the World Health Organization's International Program on Chernobyl in 1991 and 12 grants have been extended for a total of \$473,000.

Thanking the government of Japan for this assistance, we wish success to all those involved in the new \$2.6 billion "Human Security through Local Information" project started this April. Needless to say,

at this time when the financial crisis has hit both our countries hard, the help of our Japanese friends is welcome and highly appreciated.

Japan's gestures of good will and friendship could not but call for reciprocity. Not having yet recovered from the difficult transitional period, and with its economy and finances badly affected by the worldwide crisis I mentioned above, Ukraine nevertheless continues to be not only an aid recipient, but a trade partner for Japan.

Having been for all these years a good market for a lot of goods manufactured in Japan or by Japanese corporations and companies, some large Ukrainian companies started placing large orders with major Japanese manufacturers. For example, the Industrial Union of Donbass recently ordered two modern "green" electricity generators from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Worth a few dozen million dollars, they are produced with modern energy-saving technology and their use will thus contribute to the efforts to fight global warming.

Since 2005, the government of Japan started extending to Ukraine substantial loans from the official development assistance (ODA) program. Generating revenues for the Japanese lenders, that money also brings new economic development opportunities for Ukraine as these loans finance major infrastructure projects. The first ODA loan, for example, will enable us to modernize the largest and most important international airport at Boryspol near the capital Kiev. The loan's net worth is ¥19 billion. Another large ODA credit is under discussion, this time for the construction of a bridge across the Yuzhny Boog river at the industrial center of Mykolaiv.

Besides these infrastructure projects, Ukrainian and Japanese banks and companies are ready to further develop a wide variety of new projects, and to make a number of large-scale deals in such important sectors as agriculture and food, energy and preservation of the environment.

This readiness was vividly demonstrated during a series of meetings between top-level Ukrainian government and business circle representatives, and their Japanese counterparts in the first quarter of this year.

In February, a high-level Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) delegation visited our country. Its visit and meeting with Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and other members of her Cabinet was followed a month later by the visit of a large delegation of top Ukrainian government officials to Japan. The climax of this series of exchanges was the trip to Japan in March by a Ukrainian government delegation, headed by the prime minister. The prime minister and members of her delegation met Prime Minister Taro Aso, and many Japanese government officials. Deep, and reciprocally friendly and constructive talks between Ukrainian and Japanese government representatives, and business circles took place during the two-day visit.

The numerous meetings and negotiations resulted in the signing of more than two dozen memorandums and agreements on new projects and transactions. Among them were projects for coal mine ventilation systems, purchase of electricity-generating windmills, and manufacturing turbines and steam vessels, modernization of urban infrastructure, and renovation and expansion of Ukraine's gas pipelines to

name the most sizable and promising.

Prime Minister Tymoshenko informed her Japanese counterparts about her government's desire to further develop economic ties between the two countries. Meeting Japanese businessmen, she stressed that Ukraine is a large market for Japanese products worth \$3 billion annually. She invited the businessmen and bankers to join efforts to realize larger-scale investments and projects that would certainly not only benefit Ukraine but would be lucrative for Japanese businesses too.

With their bilateral trade turnover increasing sixfold in the last four years, our countries can proceed to a new level of economic cooperation, one that is not limited to trade alone. With the current severe financial and economic meltdown, the prime minister said more active and dynamic economic ties are definitely in the interests of both partners.

The Japanese side responded with a specific step that will definitely promote not only trade, but investments from Japan in Ukraine and vice versa: NEXI (the Japanese Export and Investment Insurance Agency) signed a memorandum of understanding with Ukreximbank during the visit.

Having referred to the series of top-level contacts as the most recent example of the growing ties between the two nations, I certainly cannot cover all their aspects in one article. Let me therefore mention that our cooperation is not confined to strictly bilateral relations.

Ukraine and Japan have cooperated successfully in international organizations and forums, including global ones like the United Nations, and

regional bodies. A good example of the latter is the growing ties between Ukraine and the other former Soviet Union countries on one side and Japan on the other in the GUAM-Japan format. As readers of The Japan Times probably remember, GUAM is an organization facilitating the economic and social development of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

I avail myself of this opportunity to state that we welcome Japan's growing interest in the prospects of cooperation in this multilateral format and in the region itself.

Our country never underestimates the importance of humanitarian ties and exchanges either. I am proud to say today that a number of cultural events in both countries by renowned artists and famous performers have become a tradition. Not only those of you who live in Tokyo, but residents of other cities have probably attended, or have at least heard or read about the monthly tours of Japan by the Kiev Opera and Ballet T. Shevchenko Theatre. This year they are again coming to Japan and admirers of this exquisite art will have another opportunity to enjoy their world-class performances.

On this solemn day for my country, I am glad to inform the readers of The Japan Times that the Embassy of Ukraine in Japan is doing its best to promote and stimulate Ukrainian-Japanese ties at all levels. Our mission's doors are always open to our Japanese and foreign partners and friends for any assistance we can provide, and any type of cooperation we can promote.

I invite everybody who is interested in assisting the development of Ukraine-Japan contacts and exchanges in any sphere to get in touch with us, and to contribute together with us to this noble endeavor.



Travel jewels: Crimea — the pearl of Ukraine

If you have your heart set on relaxing by the sea or enjoying historical and cultural heritage, or even some adventure, you should go to Crimea. The picturesque peninsula in the south of Ukraine, surrounded by the waters of the Black Sea and Azov Sea, is one of the most beautiful and interesting places in Eastern Europe.

The sea along the coast is clean and clear. However, what makes Crimea stand out from other seaside resorts is its clean, crisp air. Saturated with sea salt mixed with the aromas of coniferous forests and mountain grasses, the air will rejuvenate you.

Travelers will soon find that although the azure waters of the Black Sea are the main attraction of the peninsula, they are by no means the only reason for visiting this ancient yet cosmopolitan region. There is so much to see and explore in numerous mountains and caves, old parks and forest reserves.

Due to its location, nature and history, Crimea is known as a crossroads of Asian and European tribes, civilizations and cultures. Its air seems to

be saturated with legends of the Olympic gods of Greece, Amazons, Cimmerians, Taurians, and Scythians who came here from Asia and remained for almost a thousand years. For more than three centuries, Crimea was a part of the Ottoman Empire.

If you take a closer look at the history of this area you will find about 11,500 unique historical, cultural and architectural monuments related to different historic epochs, civilizations, nations and religions. The streets of Kherones and the ruins of Panticapeum in Kerch tell of a once-mighty Greek settlement. Khansky Palace in Bakhchysarai is an example of Islamic culture in Southern Europe. In 1945, the walls of Livadiysky Palace in Yalta witnessed the historical summit that ended World War II. You can even sit at the round table used for the negotiations on the future of post-war Europe.

There are various special tours focusing on the culture, traditions and history of Crimea. The most popular tours among foreign visitors are the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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Ukraine indepen



A place in history: Livadiysky Palace in Yalta, Ukraine, hosted the historic Yalta Conference in 1945. Visitors can sit at the table used by Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Stalin to discuss the future of postwar Europe. EMBASSY OF UKRAINE IN JAPAN

Crimea — the pearl of Ukraine

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ones devoted to the Imperial Romanov Dynasty in Crimea, the Crimean war of 1854-1855, the Yalta Conference of Allied Forces in 1945, etc.

For those who are not satisfied with just sightseeing, Crimea offers some dynamic activities. It could be hiking or rock climbing in the Crimean mountains, horse riding or a jeep safari, diving, paragliding and extreme tours depending on your wishes and tastes.

In addition, for about 200 years Crimea has been known as a natural science center. The Nikitsky Botanical Garden has a collection of over

50,000 species. The Institute of Marine Biology in Sevastopol is famous for its exotic fish and sea animals. Tourists can also visit dolphin shows in Sevastopol, Feodosia, Yalta and Evpatoria, and take a course in dolphin therapy.

Furthermore, Crimean wines such as Massandra, Magarach, Novy Svet, Dionis and Koktebel are well known worldwide. Winemaking in Crimea is a coeval of Hellenic settlements. There are numerous tasting rooms to visit as well as the Magarach Winemaking Institute, and the cellars of Massandra are home to the largest collection of wines.

Moreover, Massandra wines have won some 150 awards in international exhibitions and wine tastings.

To enjoy your trip to the fullest, Crimea offers a huge variety of accommodations to suit all tastes and budgets. The finest hotels, recreation centers and sanatoriums are at your service.

Nowadays, most Crimean recreation centers have spa programs, which particularly use aromatherapy based on Crimean natural aroma oils and special treatments using mud, blue clay or algae.

The geographical position of Crimea, its proximity to

Asia and Southern Europe, makes transportation easy and comfortable. Tourists can fly, or come by rail, car or bus from almost any city of Ukraine, major European cities and Istanbul. The seaports of Yalta, Sevastopol, Yevpatoria, Feodosia and Kerch connect the peninsula with the southern part of Ukraine, as well as with Russia, Georgia, Turkey and Mediterranean countries.

In Crimea everyone will find something to his/her liking, but whatever it may be, Crimea means discoveries and unforgettable experiences. Welcome to Crimea!

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Bird's-eye view: The Swallow's Nest, a castle standing on top of a 40-meter-high cliff near Yalta, Ukraine, is one of the most famous attractions in Crimea. EMBASSY OF UKRAINE IN JAPAN



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