

Russia national day

Building a better world, future together

Mikhail M. Bely
AMBASSADOR OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION TO JAPAN

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to address readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of our national holiday, Russia Day.



The holiday we are celebrating today commemorates a turning point in our country's recent history; a political and economic transformation that has also ushered in fundamental change to our society's spiritual life and our value system.

On June 12, 1990, the Declaration of State Sovereignty was adopted, marking the starting point on the road toward the construction of a new Russian society with a modern political system and market economy.

During these past 20 years — which we must remember is a relatively short period of time — I think it is fair to say that our country has undergone extensive change.

Our economic foundations have been transformed. We have renounced the socialist mod-

el and implemented market reforms that have facilitated speedy and effective development of our economy. Prior to the recent global economic crisis, annual economic growth was averaging 7 percent, while GDP in absolute terms has grown five-fold in the past decade. Foreigners returning to visit Russia after a long period away are often astonished by the step-change in living standards and the transformed look of Russian cities.

Our ideological and political systems have also undergone a complete structural change. The Russian people rejected the dogma and outdated Soviet objectives. A democratic multiparty system has been created with free and regular elections, including a president directly elected by the people. Freedom among the mass media has also been brought into effect.

Russia's foreign policy is rational and pragmatic. We do not seek to impose our views upon others. We direct our efforts toward strengthening peace around the world and settling conflicts. The Cold War is a distant memory. We are building friendly, partnership-based relations

with the CIS, European and Asia-Pacific countries, and "resetting" our relations with Washington.

Our very important relationship with Japan has also entered a new era. Confrontation has been buried and we are now strengthening our cooperation based to a large extent on common values and understanding of the world around us. It gives me great pleasure to say that bilateral relations have progressed considerably in recent years.

Intensive political dialogue is under way. Whereas in the Soviet era our leaders did not meet for decades at a time, in the past year alone, our leaders have met numerous times. Active contact is being maintained between our parliaments, ministries and other official institutions including law enforcement and military agencies. This level of cooperation could hardly have been imagined about 20 years ago. Close cooperation between our two countries also extends to the international arena. This includes working together in spheres of regional security, such as addressing recent international tensions. With the aim of agreeing mutually acceptable solutions to impor-

tant international issues, we have established a new bilateral consultative mechanism — a strategic dialogue between the first deputy foreign ministers of our countries. Today we can say that the positions of Moscow and Tokyo are closely aligned on most major international issues.

Economic and trade cooperation has also undergone considerable positive change. In 2008 the volume of bilateral trade between us reached a record \$30 billion. Regrettably it declined last year as a result of the global economic crisis, but we are today witnessing a successful revival, in part due to the delivery of Sakhalin gas and East Siberian oil. Gas, oil, timber, coal, aluminum, rare metals and — more recently — wheat, are just some of the Russian goods supplied to the Japanese market. Russia is becoming a major and reliable supplier of strategic raw materials to Japan, an important consideration at a time of increasing piracy in far-flung parts of the world.

Numerous positive developments have also been seen in investment cooperation. Last year, the total value of Japanese investments nearly doubled, reaching \$8.3 billion. Interest in the Russian market is growing among corporate Japan and with this, we are seeing an increase in the number of Japanese companies inaugurat-

ing plants in our country. Construction equipment manufacturer Komatsu, for example, recently began operations at a new excavator and forklift truck-assembly plant in the city of Yaroslavl.

Russia intends to further promote investment cooperation with Japan as part of the economic modernization program initiated by President Medvedev; now a key priority for the Russian government. Japanese companies have a major role to play and there are already many examples of companies in various spheres intensifying their activities in Russia. We are now keen to see cooperation moved to the next level, by strengthening ties in innovation-driven fields such as nuclear power, biotechnology, drugs and chemicals. We also seek support from our Japanese partners on mutually beneficial projects for the development of natural resources of the Russian Far East.

Cultural exchanges are also on the rise. Festivals of Russian culture in Japan and similar Japanese events in Russia have become a tradition. These successful events demonstrate the great mutual interest of our people in the culture of their neighbors. Exhibitions of Japanese art, theater and music are a regular success in Russia. The Russian people are fond of the works of Haruki Muraka-



Heart of the city: Red Square acts as Moscow's central hub, and was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site together with the Kremlin in 1990. JRB

mi, for example, and are interested in modern Japanese fashion. Japanese cuisine has become highly popular in our country, while Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Leo Tolstoy are well-known in Japan. There is also love for the music of Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff and of Russian ballet among the Japanese people.

"Russian Culture Festival in Japan — 2010" is currently providing Japanese audiences an opportunity to become acquainted with Chekhov's plays, which are to be performed by famous Russian theatrical troupes and dedicated to the 150th anniversary of our famous playwright. There will also be opportunities to experience Russian cinema and animation, and to attend performances by the Moscow Circus, in addition to musical concerts.

I would like to invite all readers of The Japan Times to visit Russia and experience Moscow and St. Petersburg; see with their own eyes the famous Kremlin and the Hermitage museum; feel the beauty of the architecture; visit museums and theaters; take in the atmosphere of Red Square; and view Peterhof Palace and Tsarskoe Selo (Czar's Village) in St. Peters-

burg. In Russia we say, "Better to see once than hear a hundred times." I hope that gaining a personal acquaintance with my country will help in further cementing our increasingly close relationship. In doing so, I am confident that we can further our friendship and overcome any problems, including those inherited from the past.



Steeped in history: Palace Square in Saint Petersburg has witnessed turbulent times, but is now one of Russia's top tourist attractions. JRB

Mutual benefits key to future

Yoshiro Mori
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-RUSSIA
PARLIAMENTARIANS' FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE
FORMER PRIME MINISTER

It gives me great pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Russian Federation and its people on the occasion of Russia Day.



On June 12, 1990, Russia declared its national sovereignty and a new Russia was born. Today marks the 20th anniversary of that declaration, since when the new Russia has overcome numerous hardships to become a prosperous nation, a feat I greatly admire.

In April, 2000, I had the honor to have a summit meeting with then-President Vladimir Putin for the first time. This encounter remains a vivid memory for me, and I recall him talking animatedly about his desire to share new values with Japan that would transcend past history, and his aim to build a new Russia that would contribute to international society.

These past 20 years, Japan-Russia ties have developed in a wide range of fields. Regarding economic relations, annual trade volume, which had only been a few billion dollars in the 1990s, has in recent years

been registering in the \$10 billion-\$20 billion range. Japanese companies' marketing efforts are ongoing, and a wide range of industry sectors — including automobile enterprises — are entering the Russian market. Things are changing in the energy field, too, with the production of liquefied natural gas having started in February, 2009, as part of the Sakhalin-2 energy project — a notable symbol of the mutually beneficial cooperation enjoyed by Japan and Russia. The construction of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline, which was agreed with then-President Putin in 2003, is proceeding smoothly. Oil from Far East Siberia began moving to the Asia-Pacific region at the end of 2009, and is presently being transported partly by pipeline, road and rail. The potential for further collaboration continues to grow.

Enhancing the ties that exist between our two countries is of growing importance, not only from a bilateral viewpoint, but also within the contexts of the Asia-Pacific region and the wider world. In recent years, the Russian government has adopted a serious stance vis-a-vis Far East development, and I am cognizant of the fact that Russia is targeting economic integration with the dynamically growing Asia-Pacific region.

Russian President Dmitry

Medvedev is currently putting priority on "Russian modernization" and deepening cooperation with developed countries. Particularly worthy of commendation is that government experts are discussing the maintenance and speeding-up of the Trans-Siberian Railway. I would like to offer as much cooperation as possible in connection with such endeavors. I believe that strengthening Japan-Russia relations in diverse fields in a mutually beneficial and supportive way will eventually contribute to stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is regrettable, however, that negotiations toward the conclusion of a Japan-Russia peace treaty remain stalled despite the accords in the Japan-Russia Action Plan. In order to fulfill the potential of our friendship, it is very important to conclude a peace treaty by settling the territorial issue and fully normalizing bilateral relations.

As a politician, I have made it my primary objective to help develop ties with Russia, and I am determined to continually address the development of future-oriented bilateral ties.

In conclusion, I once again offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Russian Federation and its people and sincerely wish them peace and prosperity.



Illustrious waterway: Looking out across Moscow River JRB

Toward new era of Japan-Russia ties

Kunio Hatoyama
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-RUSSIA ASSOCIATION
MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES



On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Russian Federation on behalf of the Japan-Russia Association.

The establishment of the Russian Federation by the declaration of sovereignty dated June 12, 1992, was a significant event in world history. Since that day, Russia has been making steady progress and achieving prosperity through various political and economic reforms. In a dual executive structure established in May 2008 with President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Russia has made efforts to achieve political democratization, economic modernization and ensure improvements in people's lives.

In President Medvedev's essay "Forward, Russia!," written in September 2009, and his annual state of the nation address in November, he set out a path for the country's development. Russia is abundant in natural resources including oil, natural gas and metal. I firmly believe that Russia is an indispensable partner for Japan's future. The Russian economy will grow further, and by 2020, its national goal to become one of the world's top five economies, along with the U.S., China, Japan and India, will be achieved.

In November 2009, then Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama met with President Medvedev and agreed that the two nations would act hand-in-hand in Asia-Pacific regional affairs. In their summit meeting in April 2010, they continued to have constructive dialogue aimed at solving the unsettled territorial issue. As we have now entered a new era,

relations between the two neighboring countries have been changing positively.

Japan and Russia have a 300-year history of exchanges. Russian culture is rich and outstanding, especially in the fields of art and literature. The two nations need to understand and respect each other's history, culture and ethnicity, and strengthen their ties of friendship and goodwill in a spirit of equality and mutual benefit.

Since 1965, the Japan-Russia Association has organized friendship activities to develop amicable relations through humanitarian, cultural, and economic exchanges.

Last May, the Japan-Russia Governors' Conference, cosponsored by the National Governors' Association and the Russian Committee of the 21st Century, was held in Tokyo with the support of the Japan-Russia Association. The conference welcomed Prime Minister Putin, and achieved great results in developing Japan-Russia local exchanges. The 21st Century Japan-Russia University Presidents' Forum with a total of 42 universities from Japan and Russia succeeded in expanding both nations' academic and cultural exchanges. In Moscow, we introduced the beauty of Japan at an St. Petersburg-held exhibition that featured kimono artist Gensai Okubo. The Japan-Russia Governors' Conference was held in May, and the Japan-Russia University Presidents' Conference will convene in September.

It is the 45th anniversary of the foundation of the Japan-Russia Association. We will continue to play an active role in further strengthening the friendly bilateral relations between the two nations.

A delegation from the Japan-Russia Association, which I represent, plans to visit Russia in September for serious and sincere discussions with various groups of people to help foster new Japan-Russia relations.

On the occasion of Russia Day, I would like to pray for the peace and prosperity of Russia and its people.

Congratulations
on the Occasion of
the Russian Federation's
State Sovereignty Declaration Day

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on the Occasion of
the Russian Federation's
State Sovereignty Declaration Day

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(In Alphabetical Order)

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Russian Federation
on the Occasion
of
their National Day



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