

Poland National Day Special

Long tradition of friendship and mutual aid

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Dear Readers of the Japan Times,

As Poland celebrates, on the same day as Japan, its Constitution Day, it is important to reflect on what exactly this date symbolizes in our history — especially in the context of recent, concerning developments in Europe.

On May 3, 1791, Poland or the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as it was then known, adopted the first constitution in Europe, and only the second one in the world, after the Constitution of the United States was adopted two years earlier. The May 3 constitution was revolutionary in many ways, creating a modern constitu-

tional monarchy and implementing legal protection of its citizens. It was also a desperate attempt to modernize and strengthen a state threatened by neighboring powers, including Russia, which were already in the process of dismantling Poland. Unfortunately, those powers extinguished all efforts to strengthen Poland. Four years later, in 1795, what remained of our country was destroyed and Poland disappeared from the world for 123 years.

Today, we see a somewhat similar situation in Europe. Ukraine, a country that has spent recent years building a modern, democratic state based on free speech, is also facing an existential threat. Why? Because its successful reforms and system of values are opposed by an autocratic state.

May 3 should remind us about the power of values, so strong that they make big empires tremble. Poland may have had to wait 123 years to prevail in its struggle for freedom, but fortunately today Ukraine is in

a much better position to defend itself, while the democratic world is less indifferent to the fate of the victim.

In times like these, we tend to close ranks with like-minded nations. Poland counts Japan as one such country. We are strategic partners and we share economic interests, but more importantly, we have long traditions of friendship, and in the hour of need, more than once we extended help to each

other. We remember for example, that 100 years ago it was Japan that offered shelter to Polish orphans from Siberia (descendants of Polish political prisoners), escaping from the turmoil of the Russian Revolution.

Let me finish this article with the most famous motto of Poland, which reflects our most basic values as a nation and explains why Poland will never abandon Ukraine: "For our freedom, and yours!"



A boat sits at the dock alongside the Long Waterfront in Gdansk.

GETTY IMAGES



Horse carriages stand in front of St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow's Main Square.

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This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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to the People of the Republic of Poland
on Their National Day



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Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum
The museum preserves documents of Polish orphans that came to Tsuruga.

<https://tsuruga-museum.jp/>

City of Tsuruga