

# Poland independence day

## Poland and Japan mark 90 years of diplomatic ties

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It is my profound privilege and great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of Poland. I would like to extend respectfully greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the Japanese nation. The occasion also provides me with a special opportunity to extend my best wishes to Polish citizens residing in Japan.



Poland regained its independence and freedom in 1918. Soon after World War I, as a result of the Paris Peace Conference, in March 1919, Japan became the fifth country to recognize independent Poland and diplomatic relations were established.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the establishment of those relations. On this occasion, concerts, symposiums and exhibitions are being held in both countries, and March 23 congratulatory letters from the prime minis-

ters and foreign ministers of both countries were exchanged in Warsaw and Japan. In February, the National Philharmonic in Warsaw was the venue of a concert of traditional Japanese music by the Yo-Soro ensemble. It inaugurated a cycle of events in Poland while in May in Japan, a special concert by Sinfonia Varsovia, which included works by Polish and Japanese composers, commemorated the anniversary.

2009, a year of momentous anniversaries — 20 years since the “Autumn of Nations,” as the 1989 democratic changes in Central Europe, which began in Poland, were called; 10 years since Poland joined NATO; and five years since Poland joined the European Union — is coming to a close.

Poland certainly does not stand on the sidelines of historical events. It has benefited from them and shaped them as well. If it had not been for the Solidarity movement, the 1989 Round-table Talks, the first partially free parliamentary election in the Soviet bloc and the first noncommunist government in the Soviet sphere of influence, history would have taken a different course.

This year has witnessed yet another important anniversa-

ry, a tragic one — the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. On Sept. 1, 1939, Poland was invaded by Germany and on Sept. 17, Soviet troops crossed Poland’s eastern border. Globally and from the Polish perspective, we are dealing with a road from the past to the future, with a series of milestones along the way.

Today relations between Poland and Japan have been developing with the support of numerous exchanges of citizens based on the spirit of good will and friendship. As partners sharing common values, both countries cooperate closely in various fields such as politics, economy and culture, and at the same time deepen cooperation on global issues such as the environment, climate change and development cooperation. We are glad that Japan’s place is becoming increasingly prominent in Polish foreign policy.

As ambassador of Poland, I welcome the growing intensity of political contacts between our countries in recent years. Let me recall that last December Lech Kaczynski, president of the Republic of Poland, visited Japan and Polish minister of foreign affairs, Radoslaw Sikorski, paid a visit to Japan earlier in October.

2009 has been particularly fruitful in the events strength-

ening economic relations between Poland and Japan.

In March, the Polish minister of agriculture and rural development, Marek Sawicki, visited Japan with a group of Polish food industry companies to promote cooperation between Poland and Japan in the field of agriculture. At the same time, former president of the Republic of Poland, Lech Walesa, visited Tokyo, and had a chance to promote international solidarity and democracy. Representatives of the Polish capital market, with the minister of Treasury, Aleksander Grad, as head of the delegation and president of the Warsaw Stock Exchange, Ludwik Sobolewski, promoted Polish privatization projects and business opportunities provided by the Polish capital market among Japanese companies in April.

In spring 2009, representatives of the Polish Ministry of Economy, accompanied by a group of 30 representatives of the energy industry, initiated dialogue between Polish and Japanese business and administration in the field of coal and nuclear energy. It is highly possible this dialogue will result in the conclusion of some cooperation accords soon. In the meantime, Japanese companies investigated investment opportunities in Poland

during a business mission organized by the International Friendship Exchange Council (FEC) at the beginning of October. The next business mission to Poland, coal energy oriented, has been scheduled by METI and JCOAL for December.

Also, a joint declaration on emissions trading signed by Poland and Japan in October 2008 paved the way for cooperation between both countries in the scope of flexible mechanisms established under the Kyoto Protocol. The adoption of domestic rules on emissions trading by the Polish Parliament in summer 2009 opened new prospects for further cooperation with Japan in this field. In October, during his visit to Japan, the Polish minister of environment, Maciej Nowicki, discussed opportunities for such cooperation with representatives of Japanese business and administration.

Despite the poor performance of the global economy, Poland is one of the few developed countries that will register positive growth in 2009. The high credibility of the Polish economy allowed the government to make another (11th) placement of Samurai Bonds on the Japanese market in late October this year.

Development of cooperation in the field of modern

technologies will be one of the main topics discussed during intergovernmental consultations on science and technology scheduled for Dec. 10 and 11 in Tokyo. During the meeting the new agreement on cooperation in science and technology is expected to be signed. Also, the “Science Forum: Poland-Japan 2009” will be organized as a side event to the consultations, with the aim to provide a platform for cooperation between Polish and Japanese universities.

The 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Japan was an excellent occasion to look at bilateral economic, cultural and tourism relations from a new, regional perspective. This October, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Japan in cooperation with local partners organized the “Regional Forum: Poland-Japan 2009.” This pioneer project was a first step on the way to the establishment of cooperation between Polish and Japanese regions. As a follow-up to this event, Japanese regions are expected to visit Poland next year.

On top of that, at the beginning of October, Polish and Japanese aviation authorities agreed to allow Polish Airlines to operate three

weekly flights to Narita International Airport after landing and departure slots are increased within the next few years. The establishment of direct flight connections between Poland and Japan will open a new era in bilateral relations between our countries.

Poland and Japan continue to have a very vital cultural exchange, as the interest and admiration in both countries of each other’s culture stays unceasingly high. Despite the enormous cultural and geographical distance, Polish people opened their hearts to the beauty of Japanese culture and began appreciating Japanese aesthetic sensitivity more than a century ago.

So far, four major Polish universities have established full-fledged Japanese-language departments. Also Japanese people show a continuous interest in Polish culture and their interest in the Polish language grows as

well since it has become the sixth-largest language of the European Union, as far as the number of its native speakers within the borders of the EU is concerned.

It is always a very heartwarming experience for every Pole visiting Japan to learn that their Japanese hosts recognize distinctive features of Polish culture and its uniqueness among other European nations.

Next year we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of Frederic Chopin’s birth. It may sound like an exaggeration, but if truth be told, we must admit that some Poles are even a little envious of the magnitude of love expressed by the Japanese toward Chopin. I do sincerely believe that although both our countries are so geographically distant, Poland through its culture and especially through Chopin’s music has found the way to the hearts of the Japanese nation.

**Congratulations**  
to the People of the Republic of Poland  
on the Occasion of the 91st Anniversary  
of Their Independence Day

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