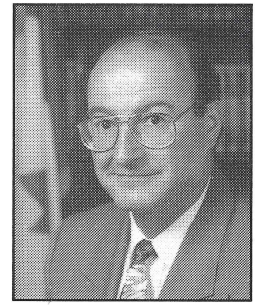


A fond «ADIEU» to Ukraine from departing Ambassador François Mathys



Excerpts from an interview with the Monitor in Kyiv

I have had the good fortune to be the first Ambassador of Canada to Ukraine, and that in itself has a special meaning, just like Canada has a special meaning here. Of course when you are the first you are a pioneer, a little bit like those Ukrainians a century or so ago in Canada. So I suppose I was returning the favour. And of course Kyiv needed pioneers because it simply was not ready to absorb a massive foreign presence three years ago. The situation is better now, but there still is quite a long way to go. Having said that, I was here, and I was able to easily establish

with no problem except when they yell in Parliament at each other; that is still beyond me.

What has been accomplished in the past two years between our two countries has been tremendous. When I presented my credentials on September 22nd, 1992 to then-President Kravchuk, he told me that he wanted the relationship with Canada to be a model one, one that would encompass all streams of activities and would be based on the recognition of two friends who want to improve the community of nations together. Well, this is very much what is being done at the moment. We are supporting Ukraine in many international institutions: if only to tell a new country how to approach this new institution, how best to take advantage of that new institution. I am not talking of the UN because Ukraine was in the UN under different auspices. I am talking about organizations like NATO, GATT, the IMF, World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and so on and so forth, whichever organization you want to accede to. We have found a very natural friend in Ukraine, so that this is rather a very easy, complementary relationship.

With the venue of the Liberal government in Canada, we have had a more normal relationship politically. Since Minister André Ouellet visited Ukraine in March-April, 1994, we

have leaped forward in terms of establishing a good, solid, legal basis for our relationship on economic, medical, and technical cooperation - that which used to be called technical assistance. Now that the legal basis on which to build exists we are certainly ready to move forward. We are at some point looking for a visit of Prime Minister Chrétien to Kyiv to return the visit President Kuchma made to Canada. That in itself was also a very significant event. The very favourable reception that he got in Canada despite some original

reservations vis-a-vis his own person, that reaction has influenced a great deal the popularity of the President in Western Ukraine, where he is not the most popular political figure overall in Ukraine. So this is an extraordinary turnover and the President realizes that it was at least partly accomplished through very close links with Canada and Canadians.

In effect, I built something from scratch. Of course the cost was long days and long nights in a hotel room, but that is rapidly forgotten. What counts is that now we have an Embassy; we have a chancellery which by the end of this year will be absolutely fully operational and accommodating an appropriate number of personnel to fulfill our mandate in Ukraine.

What do I see as priorities for the Canadian Embassy here over the next few years? I take for granted that the political relations will continue to develop normally - probably crowned by the Prime Ministerial visit here. I think technical cooperation is certainly a priority. Eventually that program will turn into trade. There is a limit to whom you can train and to this kind of help. Eventually, although recipients appreciate it, they would rather get on with trade, too.

Trade and commerce is certainly the second priority. With more economic stabilization here, through IMF-supported or World Bank-supported programs and



Last year's Presidential State Visit. L-r: Ukraine's Ministers Sergei Osyka (Foreign Economic Relations) and Hennadiy Udovenko (Foreign Affairs), and Canada's Foreign Minister André Ouellet.

contacts. For Canada doors are always open in Ukraine. A natural sympathy exists. I must admit that in large part it is to what Canada represents: a peaceful country which likes to settle conflicts on the basis of international law. But also because of the links that have been maintained over the years under whoever the rulers were at different times in history. That created an immense reservoir of sympathy on which I was able to build.

I was fortunate when I arrived in Ukraine because I didn't really need an interpreter: I spoke sufficient Ukrainian. Naturally, both my Ukrainian and Russian have improved over the past two years; now I understand Ukrainian perfectly well. Perfectly well and



A final Kyiv farewell to Amb. François Mathys from Trade Consul Dennis Goresky and Senior Commercial Officer Yuri Grushchenko.