



Russia in the eyes of a young Filipino

Ever since I got hold of my aunt's book on Grand Duchess Anastasia Romanov when I was around eight or nine years old, I have always been fascinated by the story of the Romanovs, Russia's Imperial Family whose reign ended in 1917- a fascination which led to my interest on Russia, its history, its culture and as a student of Consular and Diplomatic Affairs, its significance in world politics. It is indeed with no doubts I have always wanted to visit the Russian Federation

In May 2013, what once was a dream became a reality as I was attended the 1st Russia-ASEAN



Youth Summit in Moscow along with one of my college best friends and two other Filipina students based in Manila and Moscow respectively. The said youth summit did not only gave me the pride to represent my homeland, the Philippines but also it has gave me the opportunity to learn more on Russia-ASEAN relations and what mutual benefits can be shared by the peoples of Russia and

ASEAN Member States which as stated by H.E. Lim Kheng Hua, Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore to the Russian Federation and then-Chair of the ASEAN Moscow Committee "*has yet to reach its full potential due to historical neglect.*"

Through the visit to Moscow paved by the youth summit, I gained firsthand experiences of Russia and interacting with the Russian people which I would say is far from what I have seen on television programs and movies. Not to mention, I gained new Russian friends who study and speak the Filipino language as part of their college degree. Moreover, I got more interested in the bilateral relations between the Philippines and Russia and the prospect partnership that can be done among our peoples- such interest which unexpectedly paved the way for me to return once again to Russia for an internship as partial requirement of my college degree.



In February 2014, eight months after the 1st Russia-ASEAN Youth Summit, I returned to Moscow



to have my internship at the Embassy of the Philippines. It was indeed a joy to see Russia once again and be able to contribute, in one way or another, in maintaining and strengthening the relations between Russia and the Philippines. On a lighter note, returning to Russia was also an excitement for me as for the first time in my life I experienced snow and the winter season in general.

It was indeed a decision I would never regret. My internship at the Embassy of the Philippines gave me opportunities to experience first handedly the conduct of diplomacy and consular affairs. I was privileged to spend some time of my internship at the ASEAN Centre at the MGIMO-University wherein I got to learn more on Russian history,

culture and people, and as well as the history of Russia-ASEAN relations and its recent developments. Also, I am pleased to have learned more on the culture of our fellow ASEAN Member States through the film festival organized by the ASEAN Centre as a way of enhancing the people to people relations between Russia and ASEAN. In terms of socio-cultural relations between Russia and the Philippines and ASEAN in general, I was pleased to meet students taking

Oriental Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Moscow State University and be able to talk to them about the Philippines on our history, geography, culture, people and some brief thoughts on our role in ASEAN and bilateral relations with Russia.

Furthermore, as an individual who wants to understand Russia more, it was a must for me to visit Saint Petersburg- the city



being once the capital of Russia from the time of Tsar Peter the Great to the last days of the Romanov Dynasty, to be able to see how its past shapes its present state and what can be expected in the future. It was a surreal feeling for me during my visit to have history unfurl before

my very eyes, and to be able to walk around the streets of the city manifesting the grandeur and majesty of the Russian culture, and seem to combine Rome, Paris and Venice into one. Thus, no wonder it is considered as one of the world's most beautiful cities.



Today, 9 May 2014, Victory Day in the Russian Federation marks a month since I returned to the Philippines. I remember with joy and gratitude the experiences and insights I have gained during my stay in Russia- such valuable lessons which I am certain to be of help in my hope and desire to someday serve my country in its Foreign Service. Furthermore, as I look back to the beautiful

memories I have of Russia and the people who have been part of my journey of discovering Russia, it is my hope that may there be more opportunities for me to return.

Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Rusya at Pilipinas!


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