

## Five Months in the SRC and Wintry Sapporo

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The author

Our five month visiting fellowship in the Slavic Research Center (SRC), Hokkaido University, has come to an end and it is time to return home from Japan. I am grateful to the SRC fellowship for permitting me to complete my 1,000 page manuscript on *Ukraine. A Contemporary History* from 1953 to the present. The manuscript is currently under review with a University publisher in North America.

Our time at the SRC could not have been productive without the assistance of three factors.

Firstly, we will leave with fond memories of the helpfulness and devotion to duty of the office staff, particularly Mika Osuga, and of course the hospitality of the Director Professor Tetsuo Mochizuki. We will cherish the memories of different SRC parties at Christmas, Graduation and other events where Professor Mochizuki ensured our glasses were always full with the Japanese elixir of life, sake.

I would like to add a personal thank you to Professor Kimitaka Matsuzato, Japan's leading expert on Ukraine and the non-Russian republics of the former

Soviet Union, for supporting my application to be a visiting fellow at the SRC.

Secondly, it would of course have been impossible for representatives from seven different regions of the former Soviet Union to complete the five month visiting fellowship without the guidance and leadership of the elder brother. In this case the duty of elder brother leadership fell to my office neighbor Professor Vladimir Shishkin.

As we know from our common Soviet history, the leadership of the Russian elder brother is essential to ensuring the direction, fulfillment, commitment and productivity of the non-Russian peoples of the family of Soviet nations. During our visiting fellowship we toasted on numerous occasions "*po bratski*" [as brothers] in the full knowledge our elder brother would obtain two thirds of the bottle but nevertheless, happy in the knowledge a third would be left to be divided among seven non-Russians.

Thirdly, the long Hokkaido winter would have been less bearable without the assistance of Professor Nona Shakhnazaryan. Her buoyant optimism and zest for life, her fantastic Armenian cooking, coffees and teas, as well as her generosity in offering her office for after work informal drinks and introducing us to her two sisters, facilitated an informal and collegial atmosphere on the 5th floor of SRC. Professor Shakhnazaryan brought three speakers to the SRC who added to the vibrancy of the intellectual exchange and discourse of the Center.

Sapporo, which I have likened to a smaller "Japanese New York," is only one part of the fascinating history of Hokkaido which in the nineteenth century played the double role of an American-style "Manifest Destiny" Wild West and British-style Sydney, Australia, where convicts were sent. As the Rough Guide to Japan says, the Susukino district of Sapporo is the best entertainment district in Japan north of Tokyo and therefore, after working our usual 12 hour days in the SRC, there was always plenty to fill our time in the wintry evenings.

Visiting fellows were able to experience other parts of beautiful Japan, in my case with my wife Oksana who spent Christmas and the New Year in Japan. Big and crazy, but incredibly vibrant, Tokyo, the spiritual and more laid back Kyoto and, in my case, also Shizuoka and spending New Year's Eve in the Japanese Alps sleeping on a floor in a *ryokan* (traditional Japanese Inn) in Takayama.

We will all leave Japan with fond memories that we will cherish for a long time.



Peaceful moment after the working time