

Transcript of speech at Olympia Casino, New Zealand Trade Delegation Seminar with Mr Sutton Trade Minister, Litiy Prospekt 21 May 2004 St Petersburg Russia:

Greetings and Welcome to St Petersburg

People have asked me how I became interested in Russia.

Notably after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and certainly before this, I had never seen, through the western media any good reports about Russia.

So I became curious and decided I would have to investigate for myself.

I would like to make 2 points about what my colleagues have said

First, like David Philips, I also have Slavic blood and feel strangely at ease here

And Robin Munro mentioned about Risk here in St Petersburg.

My motto and regarding Russia is also true:

No Risk - No Reward

People often ask me why I would choose to live in Russia. Russian people are delighted and surprised that a foreigner whose native country is so distant would choose St Petersburg.

I reply:

Have you been to the State Hermitage recently?

Have you been to the Philharmonia, the Theatre, Ballet, witnessed the creative energies of Russia's Cultural Capital?

For me these are essential aspects of contemporary life and my own life in St Petersburg. In St Petersburg I feel the most alive.

It seems to me that Petersburg is place where something interesting is always happening.

Equally, I am gratified that the New Zealand government shares my own vision to encourage the participation between St Petersburg and New Zealand businesses.

I have journeyed to Russia on 3 separate occasions prior to my arrival in St Petersburg 18 month ago.

My primary objective is to promote develop and extend New Zealand influence in this region including the greater Baltic and Baltic Sea States. Additionally, promoting New Zealand companies and people as reliable trade partners and New Zealand as a suitable place to enjoy tourism and educational pursuits.

I maintain that good relations between New Zealanders engaged in business and entrepreneurial activities with Russian enterprises, are of paramount importance to the continued development of relationship between New Zealand as a whole and St Petersburg as part of the greater Russian and Baltic regional markets.

I would invite you to please visit my web site. There are displayed in dual language, opportunities from Russian and New Zealand enterprises. Please read each page particularly the News page and the Main pages. Other pages contain information about commercial, tourism and educational opportunities for Russian people and for New Zealanders.

I am personally acquainted with each enterprise and people in the enterprises that appear on my site.

New Zealand companies have often expressed uncertainty when they consider Russia as a potential market for the primary reasons that:

They do not know anyone in the region,

They do not know anyone who speaks the language

And they do not know anyone who can independently appraise them of the market in general give travel and business advice or reliably work on their behalf.

I am proud to say that have been working in St Petersburg and Moscow independently over the last 18 months and accomplishing all these in conjunction with my Russian consultants and colleagues who themselves are located in Petersburg and Moscow.

Do Russian people know about New Zealand?

When I first began to research Russian opinion I discovered the positive aspects of New Zealand life are known.

Russian people regard New Zealand as an exotic location where the sun shines all year. One student with whom I became acquainted was disappointed when I informed that native people are no longer primitives living in isolated corners of New Zealand. It had been her ambition to travel to New Zealand to meet such people.

They ask me:

Where can I find New Zealand fruit? Are there many universities?

How can I go to New Zealand.

And what can I do there when I arrive?

I have not had to encourage Russian people to consider that New Zealand is a clean and country like in the Lord of the Rings movies.

They are delighted to know that

Yes

“New Zealand” really is like in the movies.

Recently I was sitting in the metro travelling from my part of Petersburg to the centre, a journey I undertake daily.

The man standing in front of me was wearing a red jacket and boldly written on his jacket were the English words ‘Antarctic Centre’.

I became curious knowing that the logo and title somehow seemed familiar, and this Antarctic Centre was unique and only located in my city Christchurch New Zealand.

So I asked this man in Russian , although in hindsight it seems strange that I would ask him in Russian:

“Have you been to the Antarctic Centre? Are you a New Zealander?”

He replied in Russian that in fact he had been to the Antarctic Centre which is located in Christchurch has stayed in Christchurch for no less than 4 weeks on 4 separate journeys before his onward travel to Vostok in Antarctica itself.

I gave him my telephone numbers and within a short time I was invited to his place for dinner.

Sasha and his wife Lena work at the Arctic Antarctic Research Centre on Vasilevsky Island speak English well adding that God had sent me to meet them and in fact we are almost neighbours. I live less than 10 minutes walks from their apartment although in Christchurch we had never met.

His Excellency Yuri Sokolov, Ambassador of the USSR 1990 wrote:

“Our relationship began in 1820 when 2 Russian Clippers came to Queen Charlotte Sound at the northern part of the South Island to trade for water, fruits, and vegetables.

Both captains had been to Britain as cadets and studied Captain Cook’s work.

For a long time, contact with this part of the world was meagre.

Diplomatic relations were established in 1944 because we were allies during the war.

Not many people know, but it was a New Zealander Colonel Isherwood, who was the first foreigner to get the Lenin Order the highest Soviet decoration.

He was a fighter pilot covering Soviet convoys as part of an RAF squadron.

At the beginning of the post-war period we began to buy wool from your country.

In the 1960’s and 1970’s we began to buy butter, lamb and other foodstuffs.

So the traditions of our trade are quite old now.

From the beginning of Perestroika in 1985 when Gorbachev became Secretary-General, we began to pursue and promote a policy of understanding.

People are now looking to Russia, not as a distant, enigmatic country with polar bears running in the streets of Moscow, but as a normal country making up all we can in the shortest time.

We have a high respect for New Zealand policies because they are close to our own aspirations.

Our relationship has gone from confrontation to understanding and now it is time for cooperation.”

Cooperative opportunities exist through participation in my web site and I am directly pursuing the following:

Tourism

Each site participant is able to locate their own counterpart in Russia or New Zealand and

develop relationship.

For example tour operators in Russia can organise tours with their New Zealand counterpart for Russian tourists and the reciprocation also applies; New Zealand tourists can easily find ready made packages from their New Zealand tour agent who has a relationship with their counterpart in Russia.

Within the next 4 weeks another Russian tour company who have office in St Petersburg and Moscow will display their information on my site.

You will be able to order your tourist visa and business invitation from my site.

The Newspaper called Pulse which is the contemporary cultural eye of St Petersburg and St Petersburg icon for the previous 7 years, will also present completed information.

Education

Opportunities exist for Russian people to participate in educational activities in Christchurch including English Language and Computer Technology.

Recently I received an enquiry from my site concerning English Language tuition. This enquiry was the result of an internet search utilising the Russian search engine called Rambler. I telephoned the enquirer who is resident in St Petersburg and in conjunction with the school we are now formulating the possibility for this person to travel to Christchurch.

There is opportunity for New Zealanders to enjoy receiving Russian language, history, art history and political history tuition at an Institute and Language School both of whom are accredited by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science to teach Russian as a foreign language in St Petersburg.

The Arts

At present there is only one entry in this section. Guild of Masters is one of the finest Galleries in St Petersburg.

I am hopeful for more entries and am negotiating other possibilities.

Products

Products from St Petersburg, Italy and New Zealand are present. The site is multinational.

I am endeavouring to locate distributors for all the New Zealand products which are listed on my site.

Because New Zealand both derives benefit and suffers disadvantages from its apparent geographical isolation, higher production and transport costs require locating niche markets. We are working at the present with a candidate in Moscow for Solar Harvested Salt and Avocado Oil and have additional interest in Petersburg for Avocado Oil and Fruits of all types including KiwiFruit. My clients last Summer requested not only several containers of Kiwi Fruit but several per week.

Technology

I have engaged in market research for a client who manufactures boats. My client is intending to travel to St Petersburg in June to further develop marketing and meet with potential candidates. Opportunity exists for New Zealand boat builders to market their products in this region. There is demand, and a market for New Zealand

manufactured boats exists.

Currently I am investigating in cooperation with the St Petersburg Government an opportunity for other New Zealand manufacturers and hope to appraise you of developments within several weeks.

I welcome your interest in my endeavours and may I ask that if you become aware of businesses in your region who have aspirations to penetrate the markets in Russia and the Baltic Region, could you please refer them to my web site.

In cooperation with my Russian partners and colleagues please understand that we are working:

To eliminate cross-culture tensions rather than emphasise them.

To understand the things that unite all people together.

To promote profitable trade and promote good relations, between our peoples and countries.

Of the 4 speakers at this seminar Bruce Gaffikin included, you may find it interesting to know that 3 of us are from the South Island.