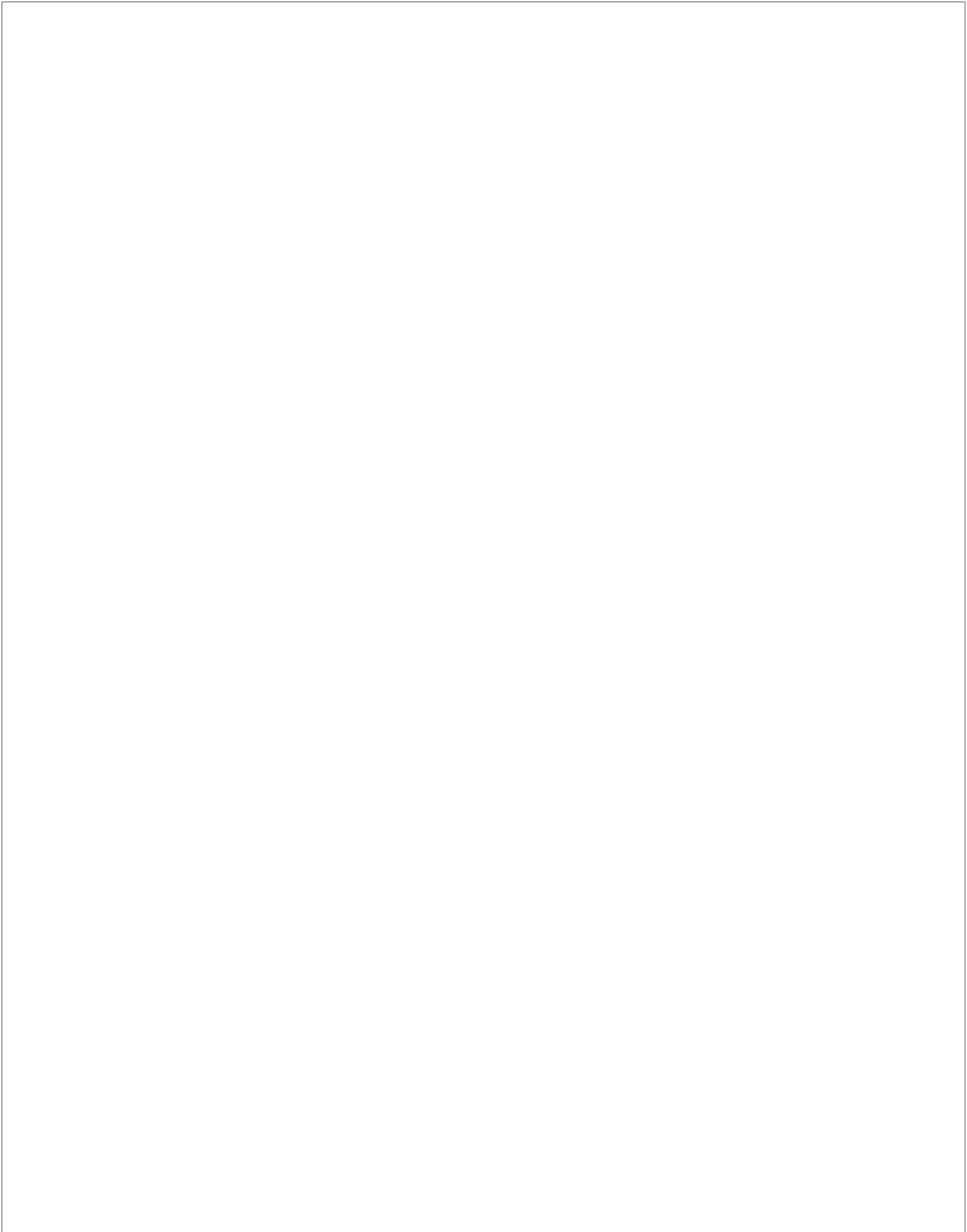


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COUNTRY: JAPAN, RUSSIA, UNITED STATES

SUBJ: (U) YOMIURI: SAKHALIN JAPANESE MARK 25 YRS OF RENEWED TIES

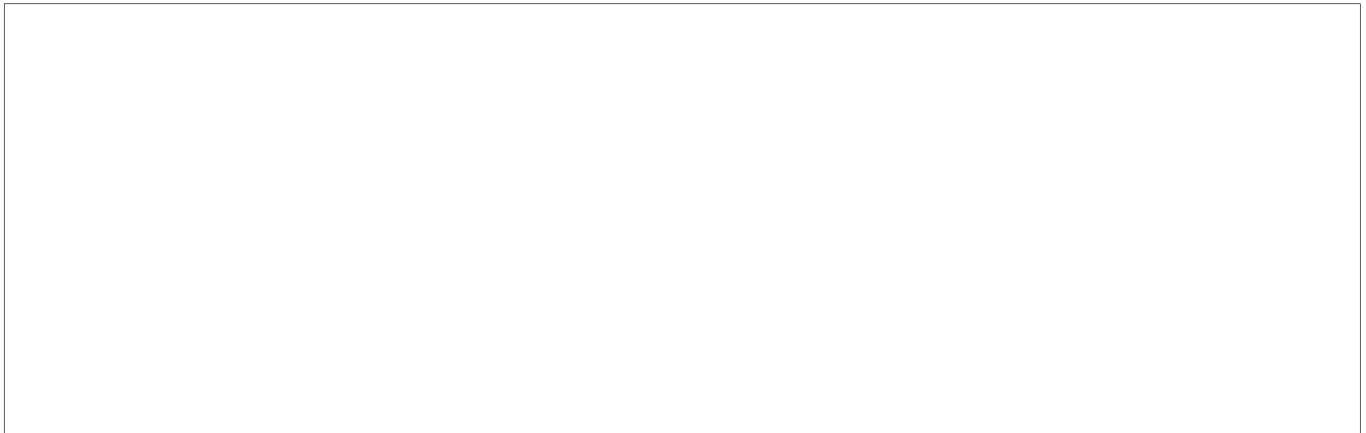
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SOURCE: TOKYO THE JAPAN NEWS IN ENGLISH 1900 GMT

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PAGE: [HTTP://THE-JAPAN-NEWS.COM/NEWS/ARTICLE/0002479292](http://THE-JAPAN-NEWS.COM/NEWS/ARTICLE/0002479292))

TITLE: SAKHALIN JAPANESE MARK 25 YRS OF RENEWED TIES

SECTION: SOCIETY

AUTHOR: The Yomiuri Shimbun

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(YOMIURI) - The Yomiuri Shimbun

This year, those involved with efforts to facilitate temporary return trips for the Japanese who remained in Sakhalin (Karafuto), Russia, after the war marked the 25th anniversary of their endeavors. About 1,200 people in total, including the children of those left behind, have visited Japan. The effort has provided means for families split apart during the period of confusion following the war to reunite. Their supporters have said they want to continue as long as there are still people who have an emotional connection to Japan.

Sisters reunite

"I'm so happy we could see each other this year, too." In a hotel in Sapporo where a party for those visiting Japan was held, Reiko Seki,

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67, who lives in Sakhalin, clinked glasses of juice with her sister Svetlana, 54, who lives in Sapporo.

The sisters were born in Sakhalin after the war. They lived in a remote location far from any urban center, so their parents never heard that Japan was pulling out from the region. Both parents died without returning to Japan.

The sisters both married local men. However, Svetlana "strongly felt" her Japanese identity and moved to Japan in 2012 as a permanent resident when her children moved away from home. Her sister Reiko continues to live in Sakhalin to stay with her four children.

The Japanese government covers travel and accommodation expenses for trips to Japan. "I can't afford to go to Japan on my own. This program is vital for us sisters," said Reiko, who lives on a pension.

Govt moved to action

The project started when journalist Yoichi Ogawa, who is now 84, made a goodwill visit to Sakhalin in 1988. During his visit, he met a Japanese person there who told him, "I wanted to see my mother who lives in Japan." Learning of the many Japanese who were stuck in Sakhalin, he started Karafuto Douhou Ichijikikoku Sokushin no Kai (the association for the advancement of the temporary return of compatriots in Sakhalin).

At that time, the undertaking was not well received by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, which described those in Sakhalin as "people who stayed on their own volition." However, Ogawa, among others, revealed that the ministry had created a "list of unrepatriated people" of the 175 Japanese still in Sakhalin in 1984.

The ministry noted in the list that 70 percent of those people wanted to return to Japan.

The association started its efforts as the Soviet Union began its perestroika reforms. In May 1990, 12 people were able to make trips to Japan.

Currently, the effort is led by a nonprofit organization called the

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Japan-Sakhalin Association, with the consent of the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry. The effort is targeted toward Japanese who have been living in Karafuto since before the war, or children born to Japanese parents after the war. People can participate every year, and this year 36 people came, some with their children, enjoying sightseeing and time with relatives.

Around 300 people have permanently moved back to Japan with the support of the association as well.

"Many Japanese have been able to redeem their pride as Japanese through their temporary trips back to Japan. Although the number of participants has been declining in recent years, it is a rare opportunity for second and third generations to understand the cultures of Japan and Russia. The government should consider them as well," said Hiromi Saito, chairman of the association.

1,500 Japanese left behind

Southern Sakhalin came under Japanese rule in 1905. According to Taisho Nakayama, an assistant professor of modern history at Kyoto University, 400,000 Japanese lived there before the war.

On Aug. 9, 1945, the Soviet Union abruptly began to wage war against Japan and their forces crossed the 50th parallel of latitude, the border at the time, taking control of all of Karafuto.

Due to the emergency evacuation following the Soviet invasion and Japanese retreat in 1946, most residents returned to Japan, although a treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union prevented Japanese women who had married Korean men from doing so.

Additionally, the Soviet Union, hungry for labor, held on to engineers and other skilled workers. This led to around 1,500 people being left behind.

Following the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, people started returning to Japan. However, at the time people could not freely move between Sakhalin and Japan, so some chose to stay because they did

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not wish to part with family members. [Description of Source: Tokyo The Japan News in English -- Website of daily published by center-right Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan's largest daily; launched in March 2013 as a replacement to The Daily Yomiuri Online; URL: <http://the-japan-news.com/>]



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