

## **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN THE DIPLOMATIC SPHERE**

I am a second-generation career diplomat. After receiving specialised education (international law) at the Educational and Scientific Institute of International Relations of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, I started working at the Legal Department of the MFA of Ukraine, going from a specialist to the head of the department.

I served on two long missions abroad: as a Vice-Consul of the Consulate General of Ukraine in Praševi (Slovak Republic) and as Counsellor (Deputy Head of Mission) of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Slovak Republic.

As of April 2022, I work as a Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Czech Republic, and from August of the same year, as a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

From the beginning of russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the working hours of the Embassy changed to round-the-clock. None of us even remember what free time and weekends are, and all the efforts are directed at Ukraine's victory.

I am also glad to note that the relations between our friendly countries are developing rapidly. On 1 January 2023, we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

Over those years, Ukraine and Czechia built relations based on a commitment to democratic ideals, the rule of law, human rights protection and world order, and the resistance to the russian aggressor.

The thirty-year cooperation between our countries consists not only of traditional elements of interstate communication, such as numerous visits at the various levels and the expansion of the bilateral contractual and legal base, but also the implementation of new forms and tools of economic cooperation, the strengthening of ties between regions, the development of contacts between sister cities, active communication in the spheres of culture and art, education and science, health care and sports. A notable contribution to the strengthening of Ukrainian-Czech relations was made by Ukrainians in Czechia and Czechs living in Ukraine.

Since the beginning of russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Government of the Czech Republic has demonstrated consistent support for Ukraine's

sovereignty and territorial integrity both bilaterally and in multilateral formats, including within the EU, UN, NATO, Council of Europe, and OSCE.

In the context of supporting Ukraine, the Czech Parliament adopted a number of important decisions:

- 24.02.2022 – The Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) of the Parliament of Czechia adopted a resolution condemning russia's military aggression against Ukraine.
- 25.02.2022 – Senate (Upper House) adopted the corresponding resolution – 'On the russian invasion of Ukraine.'
- 05.04.2022 – The Chamber of Deputies unanimously adopted the resolution 'On the condemnation of war crimes committed by the russian army on the territory of Ukraine.'
- 07.04.2022 – The Senate adopted a corresponding resolution.
- 06.04.2022 – The Chamber of Deputies unanimously adopted a resolution recognising the 1932–1933 Holodomor in Ukraine as genocide of the Ukrainian people.
- 11.05.2022 – The Senate adopted a resolution 'On support to Ukraine.'
- 15.06.2022 – The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies adopted two resolutions: 'On the address of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the members of the Senate' and 'Supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemning the military aggression of the russian federation.'
- 02.10.2022 – President of Czechia Miloš Zeman signed a joint statement of the presidents of Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia regarding russia's attempts to annex Ukrainian territories illegally.
- 15.11.2022 – The Chamber of Deputies adopted a resolution 'On the escalation of russian aggression against Ukraine, crimes against the Ukrainian civilian population and support for the creation of a special international criminal tribunal for the investigation of war crimes committed by the armed forces and power structures of the russian federation', according to which the russian regime was recognised as terrorist.
- 14.12.2022 – The Senate adopted a resolution 'On the genocide of the Ukrainian people during the Holodomor, organised by the Stalinist regime of the Soviet Union in 1932–1933.'
- 15.02.2023 – The Senate adopted a resolution 'On russian aggression against Ukraine', in which it once again condemned the russian invasion of Ukraine and supported the need to create an international tribunal to investigate the crime of aggression committed by senior officials of the russian federation against Ukraine.
- 31.05.2023 – The Senate adopted a resolution 'On preparations for the NATO Summit in Vilnius in July 2023', in which it called for deepening of

Ukraine's integration into NATO structures even before the official start of the process of our country's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance, to support the fastest possible track to NATO membership for Ukraine, and to continue the supply of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine, coordinating actions with allies among NATO member states.

The Czech Republic's support is significant in the context of further implementation of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Grain from Ukraine initiative regarding grain export to the countries of Africa and the Middle East.

The Czech side took part in the inaugural International Summit on Food Security (26 November 2022, Kyiv) and joined the Joint Statement based on the results of the event. Czechia's financial contribution amounted to 2 million Czech crowns (85 thousand dollars). We are grateful to the Czech government for the quick reaction and condemnation of the actions of the Russian Federation regarding the withdrawal from the Grain Deal.

It is important to note that Czechia has joined all EU sanctions against the Russian Federation and is a co-sponsor of the resolutions of Ukraine within the UN General Assembly. The Czech Government also made the decision to close the airspace for Russian aircraft, recalled its ambassadors from Russia and Belarus, closed the Russian consulates in Karlovy Vary and Brno, and suspended the work of the Czech consulates in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. The Czech Republic stopped issuing visas and long-term and permanent resident permits for citizens of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus and began investigating the economic ties of business entities with Russia and Belarus.

To increase the pressure of the Czech sanctions on the aggressor state, the Law 'On Sanctions' was adopted (entered into force on 3 January 2023), the scope of which makes it an addition to the current sanctions regimes and which includes the procedure for forming a national list of individuals and legal entities, and also the possibility to 'freeze' their assets if these entities are not included in the EU sanctions list for certain reasons.

On 26 January, the Czech Republic held the first face-to-face meeting for the Core Group on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine in Prague. It was an important meeting that laid the foundation for further successful work of finding effective solutions for punishing Russian soldiers for all war crimes committed against Ukrainians.

The Czech society remembers its history very well. Fifty-five years ago, on the night of 20–21 August, the territory of Czechoslovakia was occupied by the troops of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, ending the hopes of the Czech and Slovak peoples for a free democratic life. The Czechs and Slovaks, who themselves experienced the occupation in 1968, perfectly understand the current tragedy of the Ukrainian people resisting the Russian aggression. In August 2022, a spontaneous initiative took place in Czechia on the anniversary of

the occupation under the slogan Let's Transfer 1968 crowns to the Ukrainian Military. More than 14,000 people took part in the campaign and transferred 24.2 million Czech crowns to the charity account of the Embassy. Lawyer Petr Němec and the Arms for Ukraine initiative organised the event.

From the first days of the full-scale Russian invasion, the Embassy opened a charity bank account for the purchase of Czech-made military equipment for Ukrainian defenders. The Czech Republic is one of Ukraine's main partners in the supply of necessary weapons and ammunition.

Just in the first few days of the war, Czech citizens and organisations transferred approximately 64 million euros to charitable funds in support of Ukraine. We are also grateful to Czechia for providing humanitarian aid. Of course, the volumes have decreased somewhat, but Ukraine receives aid constantly – both from the public and private sectors.

Czechia greatly helped Ukraine overcome the energy crisis, in particular, having sent more than a hundred generators and dozens of transformers.

The diplomatic corps in Prague contributed to solving the issue in no small part. On their own initiative, EU ambassadors consolidated their efforts and purchased a powerful generator.

It is worth noting that Czechia took patronage over the Dnipropetrovsk region. On 11 January 2023, the Government of Czechia introduced the position of the Governmental Envoy for the Reconstruction of Ukraine.

About 520,000 temporarily displaced citizens of our country found temporary shelter in Czechia, receiving everything they needed and, most importantly, safety. Per capita, the largest number of Ukrainians came to Czechia. Kindergartens, schools, and universities accepted our citizens and continue to do so. We are delighted that Ukrainian pupils and students are described as extremely intelligent and talented.

The high intensity and the dynamic of the Ukrainian-Czech bilateral dialogue at all levels allow the provision of comprehensive and effective support to Ukraine on issues important to its national interests. Czechia stands unequivocally on the side of Ukraine, and my efforts as a diplomat are aimed mainly at further developing dialogue and partner relations between our countries.