

The Deputy Head of Mission,  
British Embassy in Ukraine,  
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The UK's image in Ukraine.

I feel obliged to draw your attention to three incidents in the past year which I feel detract from our image here, and which could have been put right without diplomatic embarrassment:

1) In August a Ukrainian friend, after fulfilling the necessary formalities and paying the requisite fee, was refused a visa to the UK. Her application was accompanied by a letter I had written in her support, yet I have no evidence of any effort being made to communicate the result to me. I well understand that it is not for me to challenge the decision itself, but I do feel that I should have been informed; this would have been no more than a common courtesy to be expected from any Western country, especially our own.

2) Towards the end of October I attended the 'Last night at the Proms' produced at the MasterKlass theatre not far from your residence. It was a memorable evening, ending with the traditional singing of 'Rule Britannia'. Everybody seemed to appreciate the British self-deprecating attitude to a display of what at face value is blatant jingoism. Yet among that audience, I could identify only a handful of Her Majesty's subjects. What a shame! Surely it would be a simple matter to advise us of such cultural events; as we learnt at your enjoyable reception last spring, your staff now have a data base of at least those of us who have registered their local contact information with you.

3) At the MasterKlass event we were given paper flags to wave – the Union Jack on the obverse, and the Ukrainian one on the reverse. By contrast, at the recent Holiday Bazaar sponsored by the IWCK, many of the Union flags I spotted were upside down, and of these the paper versions were impossible to put right. This was because they had been printed with the identical pattern on both the obverse and reverse. When I tried to complain about this, I couldn't find anyone who even seemed to care.

While these problems may be individually trivial, I believe them to be collectively important. If I had to offer a solution, it would be let nothing produced by local staff to pass out of your embassy without first being checked by a native Briton.

I last had the pleasure of talking to the ambassador at the recent Remembrance Day ceremony, and accordingly add my ex-service style in signing myself,

Michael Bedwell  
Lt Cdr RNR retired