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ОБЩНОСТЬ ЖИЗНЕННЫХ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЙ РУССКИХ И АМЕРИКАНЦЕВ

В работе дается сопоставительный анализ культурологических различий и сходства между США и Россией. Сравниваются характерные для американцев и русских отношения к историческим событиям и современной жизни. Подчеркивается большое сходство образа жизни русских и американцев, близость их жизненных установок. Делается вывод, что менталитет американцев во многом похож на менталитет русских, хотя американцам присуща большая гибкость. Рассуждения дополняются многочисленными примерами.

For almost 100 years, two of the world's strongest superpowers have lived on one planet separated by a world of difference. Or so we believe. There is a certain amount of truth in that first sentence of thought. But, as in all thoughts and beliefs in life, there is also a certain amount of inaccuracy to the "world of difference" belief.

The USA. is a country that has for nearly a half century taken a closely magnified look at the goings on of Russia, which is not to be confused with the former U.S.S.R. Concerns of the U.S. were primarily about one, extremely powerful country, which supported and held that entire union together. Obviously, this American magnifying glass was focused on a very particular piece of Russia, the military might of her, and just what threat she could potentially pose to the U.S. It goes without saying that Russia, conversely, held a similar magnifying glass on the U.S. But with that magnifying glass, we looked and we learned about a lot more than our military strength. We learned about each other, our lives, our culture, our beliefs, our peoples. Our borders lying over 10,000 miles from each other, how are we different in our every day, human culture and beliefs?

There is a large faction of Russians who greatly mistrust the media, assuming that journalists here hold little in terms of an ethical code. It is believed that they are too often bribed to comment or report on an issue subjectively, with bias towards the highest paying party. Americans however, firmly trust and believe in journalistic accuracy and ethics. Russians tend to think U.S. media is no different than Russian journalism. But the news surrounding our president refutes that claim. If this Russian belief were accurate, then George Bush would be praised highly by the media, as he would pay a high price for positive reporting on him. But the media is not praising him; just the opposite. The president, his qualities, decisions and proposals are met with much criticism.

Moving on to issues of tolerance, there is also a large difference. Russians are somewhat unaccepting of minorities and do not fear to make it known. Americans, on the other hand, now have a slightly higher tolerance than Russians for minorities, but the point is focused on American fear of admitting any such prejudices. Several years ago, for example, when gay students at an American university publicly claimed that Jesus Christ was homosexual, others criticized them heavily and intolerantly with derogative comments. University officials, however, criticized only these people, protecting the freedom of speech of gays. This was done in fear of the public attacking the university for allowing hate crimes and gay discrimination on campus. If gays made this religious claim in Russia, they would be attacked not only for their sexual preference, but for sacrilege.

The difference in family cohesion is evident as well. There is a clear separation in the support and strength of family togetherness between the two nations. Russians for the last century have

believed in family first and only. Social events are family and friend related at all times. This is not so true for Americans. There is not such a strong belief to be so close with families as there is in Russia. Perhaps that is why many Americans are obsessed with head doctors for emotional support whereas Russians turn to the family.

People in Russia are very mistrusting of many beliefs and authorities. As with mistrust of journalism, Russians refuse to believe that many people are inherently ethical or capable of amazing feats. Many people in Russia claim that it was impossible for anyone to fly two planes into the World Trade Towers without help from the government or people in control towers assisting them. I think the historical facts of Japanese kamikazes flying planes into aircraft carriers in the Pacific Ocean with pinpoint accuracy in World War II refutes this control tower help theory. But the point of believers of this theory is that the government helped terrorists attack America so it could eventually declare a war for oil. Americans, however, have a stronger trust that the government is working for our best interests number one. Russian people also tend to think it was impossible to fly those big planes alone, without help from others. This is Eastern and Western belief in a clash here. Americans have long had a convincing belief that anyone, anywhere, anyhow, can do anything they want to do, no matter how daunting or impossible a task, even piloting large planes into tall buildings.

Our similarities are also obvious. Number one, our family morals are even. Russians believe in stronger and closer families, but we both insist on marrying one person, having children, and suffering ourselves to make life a little easier for our much loved children. There are cultures still today in several places where numerous families and wives are encouraged. But we both hold the value of one family, one love. Russians and Americans generally believe in the value of hard work and commitment to providing for families (work 8 or 9 hours a day, 5 days a week). We also both enjoy entertainment and relaxation in a similar fashion. More than much of the world, we both enjoy the luxuries of television, internet, electronical equipment etc. Much of the world is what we would both consider third world lifestyles. We both work hard to afford us as many luxuries as we can reasonably afford.

There is also a major similarity that many Russians and Americans know, feel, believe, and live in every day, although hardly anyone in either country, is aware of this striking similarity. For almost 50 years, our two countries lived in constant fear, worry, suspicion, perhaps in some cases contempt for the other, using that magnifying glass to keep a close watch. We also both strived to one-up the other. Whatever one country did, the other tried to do better. The U.S. became the strongest nuclear threat, so Russia (technically the U.S.S.R.) did. Russia launched Sputnik, so the U.S. created it's own advanced space program. It even filtered down to relatively unimportant aspects of life such as sports. For example, the victory of the American hockey team over the Russians in the 1980 Winter Olympic is still in the minds of Americans proud of their sportsmen.

Over the years we lived to be better than the other. We got to know each other so well, to understand and learn and adjust with one another, even in times of being adversaries. Part of that still carries on today. We feel sympathetic, more compassion for each other than we do for other countries. Now after all those years as opponents, something difficult to see has happened. We unintentionally became familiar and almost, amiable with each other. Today, we both feel we know each other in a very distinct way. By standing against each other, we almost rubbed off on one another. There is somewhat of a bond that was created. Russia is a very proud place, as is the U.S. Russians and Americans in general both believe (even if it isn't admitted by anyone) that no one is better than us, that somehow we'll be the strongest, smartest, richest country in the world. Russians, aside from admitting some problems, are proud to be Russian. The same with Americans. We both believe we'll make the rest of the world envious. That has a lot to do with our histories weaving together as they did, even as adversaries.

Today, we are both democracies with beliefs in freedom of speech and obtaining power and/or wealth through hard work and similar family ideals. Russia and the U.S. are perhaps more alike in basic culture and human lives than any other cultures. Our lives are rather similar. What's the common thread? America and Russia have been woven together through the course of history. There are, of course, some wrinkles in the fabric of our cultures. But there is clearly, a common thread.