

Mentality of the Russians as the element of culture of the nation

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the complex scientific research of the Russians' mentality problem. The authors note that such mental features as humility, patience, conciliarism, collectivism, peacefulness, gullibility, dreaminess, egalitarianism, self sacrifice and others are typical for the Russian nations. Besides, it is pointed out that the Russians, apart from the Europeans, are spendthrift. The authors make it prominent that one of the most important mental features of the Russians is the tolerance and lenience in the international relations sphere. In the globalization era, the process is rapid of destroying the traditional nations' features and characteristics, of leveling the living and working conditions and deforming the mental peculiarities of the latter. However, the destruction of the old mentality and the formation of the new mentality are not that quick, and so studying the manifestation and the sources of the mentality will help to better understand the past and evaluate the present.

[Suslov M.G., Zhukova T.M. **Mentality of the Russians as the element of culture of the nation.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(12s):191-194] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 37

Keywords: mentality, the Russians' mental features, the culture of the nation, globalization, history, international communication

Introduction

Every nation has its own general features and characteristics originating from a centuries history, natural and climatic environment, labor type, way of life, economic structure and other factors.

The mentality problems are of a great interest not only for the Russian researchers [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8], but for many scientist of the world [9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16]. Their attention is focused on different aspects of the business qualities and mentality of nations from many countries. In the works of G. Hofstede the *power distance* issues are described, as well as striving for *uncertainty avoidance*, *individualism*, *masculinity* [17, 18, 19]. R.D. Lewis [20] and W. Ouchi performed the systematization and the comparison study of the business cultures in the international business [21]. There are many works on the culture and the psychology of different nations.

Mental features typical for the Russian nationalities

What are the typical mental features of the nationalities of Russia and how do they influence their culture? The features are rather numerous: humility, patience, conciliarism, collectivism, peacefulness, gullibility, dreaminess, egalitarianism, self sacrifice and others. Some of them were described by the historians, philosophers, psychologists [22, 23].

One of the mostly often mentioned mental features of the Russians is the laziness and the diligence. At first sight, these are mutually exclusive features and they cannot characterize the same nation. However, both are met. For many centuries, up to the second half of the XX century, Russia was an agrarian country and peasants were a prevailing part of the population. There are many countries all over the Earth that remained agrarian for a long period of time, and some of them are still agrarian. It seems that a similar labor character should result in the similar features formation. This is true, but the same labor in different natural and climatic environment gives rise to completely different features and characteristics for different nations.

For example, the Russian and the European peasants had significantly differed from each other and they still do. A European peasant has historically worked steadily, and a Russian peasant has worked jerkily, by fits and starts, i.e. not rhythmically. The well-known tendency is expressed in proverb "The Russians harness their horses slowly but they drive them fast!" [24]. This proverb has reflected the mental feature of many Russians which is called "failure to work", or – speaking grossly – "laziness".

The Russians are traditionally considered to be a lazy nation. The famous Russian writer, A.M. Gorky, wrote: "A Russian is a genius is his laziness". For many years, when the Russian higher educational establishment students are asked about the Russian nation features, the laziness is named among the first.

So what is hidden by this characteristic of the Russians, and of the other nations of Russia? It is the noticeable difference between the Russians and the Europeans that is hidden. The Europeans work rhythmically with no hurry. The reason for this is mostly not in the Europeans themselves and not in their genetic code, but in the fact that the European natural and climatic conditions are different.

The agricultural season in Europe lasts from 8 to 10 months. European peasant can plow with no hurry, can sow with no hurry, get his crops and process the product in the same slow manner. In Russia, the peasant could not afford it, because the significant territory of Russia has the agricultural season that lasts for 4-5 months. In this case – plowing is very fast, sowing is very fast, taking the harvest is also very fast. If the harvesting is not fast enough, the crops can be spoiled by the autumn rain; it can freeze with the early frosts or be covered with snow. This long winter provided the relaxation to the peasants and long rest from the intensive work in the field. The forced “downtime” or a rather long period of staying apart from the active agricultural works is commonly treated as laziness.

It seems that this natural and climatic factor should have influenced only the Russian peasants, and it must not have influenced industrial production or the non-rhythmic labor character after the transfer to the industrial phase of development. However, that is not the case. The recent Soviet past showed the vitality of this mental feature even outside the peasant environment.

In the Soviet period, when shopping for a thing, the citizens paid more attention not to the design of the functional properties of the goods but to the date of manufacturing of the product: the radio set, the TV set, the refrigerator, the car or any other device. The date of manufacturing was very important because the Russians knew that at the beginning of the month, at the factories, the workers were getting the work started, they did their job with no hurry, and this meant that their actions were more accurate and good. The workers at the factories thought that there was much time left before the end of the month, there was no reason to be in a hurry, and slowly they did their work with a high quality. At the end of the month, the work became quicker, the “last minute rush” started, that often resulted in a significant product quality loss.

Thus, the peasant features, the peasant mentality to “harness the horses slowly but drive them fast” moved to the cities and the industrial production sector. The big rush and postponing the work execution was noticed among the scientists, creative specialists and other categories of people. Taken one with another, all these significantly

influenced both the production and the administrative culture, which used to be and continues to be insufficiently high in Russia.

Together with the laziness, the diligence is often mentioned as a mental feature. And this is, also, true. In Russian severe climatic conditions, people had to spend more efforts and time to get the product necessary for their survival than the Europeans did. Only at the cost of the highest diligence a man could survive in Russia, not speaking about an easy life.

It looks like these root causes are associated with one more mental feature of the Russians – to be easily inspired to do one business or another, to wish to “move mountains”, but also to slack off quickly not having finished the job. This circumstance influences the general culture, the administration culture, protest moods and so on.

The Russians, apart from the Europeans, are spendthrift. During the visit to one of the West German schools, the teacher was asked – “What do you say to your pupils on the first day of their schooling?” The teacher answered that he tells his pupils about joining the studying process and about the fact that “our country is small, we are short of everything, and so we need to use everything sparingly!” As early as at school, the vital attitude for thriftiness is cultivated. In Russian schools, the teacher often speaks about how big and how wealthy our country is, and if it is wealthy – does everything need to be saved? We still witness that both individuals and the state are unthrift.

In Russia, where the majority of the population has a harder and a poorer life than those in the developed countries, the thriftiness feature is less frequently met. In the Soviet period, one could see a loaf of bread thrown into the garbage and kicked around by the boys outside playing football with it. Nowadays we can see coins here and there, which are not taken by anybody, even if the coin is not ten or fifty kopecks but is a whole ruble or two. The mushroom hunters find plenty of abandoned valuable things in the forests: rolls of wires, barrels with tar, cable, tractor caterpillar bands and the whole tractors or massive ferrous machines.

The Russian state is also spendthrift; the negative use of the natural resources in the XX century is the proof of that, as well as the milliard debt writing-off for friends, neighbors and different other countries. This is of course not only wastage and a large scale of the merchant activities; it also characterizes other mental features of the Russians: the generosity, a will to help the others, to save countries and nations in their difficult situations. This is a distinctiveness of the government political culture and the nation political culture.

The tolerance and the lenience in the international relations sphere are very important mental features of the Russians. Russia is one of the most multinational countries of the world and, for many centuries, the nations peacefully lived with each other. Today, when the nationalism waves are spread all over the world, Russia mostly retains the international peace. This is associated with the geographical and the geopolitical position of Russia. It is open at three sides – in the west, in the south and in the east. Russia has never had natural borders in the form of the high mountains or oceans which could be a reliable protection. This led to numerous invasions and wars.

For a number of centuries, the Russians spent more than a half of their time for wars. Sometimes it happened that Russia fought 16 wars simultaneously. In the conditions of the real external threat, a separate nation could not protect itself on its own. The independence of the Russian state could be protected only with the mutual efforts of different nations. This forced the nations to act together. They could fight together only in case they were not enemies with each other.

The external threat developed tolerance and lenience in national relations and a definite culture of the international communication [6]. In the conditions of globalization it is being destroyed and it will continue to deteriorate, but the centuries traditions will for some time keep both good relations between the Russian nations and the international communication culture that was created through the centuries.

The mental perceptivity of one nation to the culture of other nations is also associated with the mentioned above, as well as the inclination and readiness for the assimilation. 60 million people in the Soviet Union were born from interracially married parents or got married interracially, and this influenced the interrelations and the cultures' russification and internationalization.

The Russians' attitude to themselves and the state is connected with the many centuries of external threat. For many centuries, the European countries had the main value in freedom, democracy and the human right and the humans themselves, but these never were the main values in Russia. The unwhipped noblemen appeared in Russia only at the end of the XVIII century. It is impossible to even imagine that a knight could be whipped in any European state. In Russia, the noblemen not only were heavily whipped, they were also impaled and beheaded, because for many centuries, the main value for the Russians was the state, and not simply the state but a strong state with a strong power. This

developed a wheedling political culture of the Russians, the echo of which is still alive.

Conclusions

Summing up we can make a conclusion that the invisible mentality features follow the nations through many centuries, fixing themselves in the traditions and customs, in the behavior of definite people, social groups and the nation as a whole. This is a specific element of the everyday routine that influences the production, legal and household cultures.

In the globalization era, the process is rapid of destroying the traditional nations' features and characteristics, of leveling the living and working conditions and deforming the mental peculiarities of the latter. However, the destruction of the old mentality and the formation of the new mentality are not that quick, and so studying the manifestation and the sources of the mentality will help to better understand the past and evaluate the present.

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7/20/2014