

An Open Letter to the Russian People

by Phillip W. Weiss

Recently the United States government imposed new sanctions on Russia. Subsequently the value of the ruble dropped by 3 percent relative to the dollar.

Please understand the following: the actions of the U.S. government do not necessarily conform to my personal feelings as to how the United States should treat Russia. I have the utmost respect and admiration for the Russian people. During my visits to Russia, every Russian with whom I had contact treated me with cordiality, hospitality and respect. That includes at my hotel, in public transportation, in the post office, on the street, in food markets, and in many other venues.

Further, during my visits, I witnessed no evidence of any hostility toward the United States or the American people. Nor did I witness any kind of government propaganda or similar campaigns meant to spread, instill or incite negative feelings about the United States.

In the United States the American media, and especially the film industry, demonizes Russia and Russians. According to them, Russian society is thoroughly corrupt, dominated by oligarchs, and governed by a sham democratic government that in reality is a dictatorship. Once again, that was not the Russia

I experienced during my visits. I witnessed a society that has a thriving and growing middle class and whose people do not live in fear of their government.

Let me emphasize this point: Russia has totally repudiated its Marxist past. Today, Russia has as much connection to its Marxist/Soviet/Stalinist past as Germany has to its Nazi/Third Reich/Hitler past. To judge the Russian people, and especially to formulate any official policies toward Russia, based upon their Communist past is just plainly unfair. It would be like judging the character of the American people based upon their history of having supported slavery.

In May 1988 President Ronald Reagan visited Moscow. During his visit President Reagan, in Red Square, expressed the wish for friendship between the Russian and American people. He stated, "We want friendship between our two peoples." Let us be guided by President Reagan's words.

Nothing in this letter should be construed as meaning that I condone everything Russia does. Russia has its Issues, and some of her actions, especially in the area of foreign affairs, have raised legitimate concerns in the United States, concerns that I share. However, in no way do I condone or support using these concerns as a pretext to formulate policies that will intentionally inflict or cause material harm to the Russian people. That will do no one any good. Nor is it an appropriate way to treat friends.

Sources

Trump Administration Imposes New Sanctions on Putin Cronies

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Russian ruble drops to 2-year low as further sanctions spell trouble

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The demonisation of Russia risks paving the way for war

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Hollywood stereotypes: why are Russians the bad guys?

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20141106-why-are-russians-always-bad-guys>

From spies to allies and back: Russians portrayed in Western movies

https://www.rbth.com/arts/culture/2016/10/24/from-spies-to-allies-and-back-russians-portrayed-in-western-movies_641601

President Reagan Walking in Red Square with Mikhail Gorbachev, Moscow, May 31, 1988

<https://youtu.be/LZUu5WraroM>