Exchange student explores America

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Contributing Writer

The following was written by an exchange student from Russia currently studying at Tufts.

For a long period it was nothing more than my dream to visit the United States of America. People who had already visited it always told me that it's really an amazing country. They never told me about the drawbacks--it seems to me that every country has some of them, but they always preferred to talk with me about "the American way of life." The USA in my dreams was the land of skyscrapers and beautiful parks, shops full of goods and wonderful highways. "Is it really true?" I asked myself about everything they told me. It became a strong desire to enter the USA one day in order to experience all the things we discussed.

And suddenly I got a real opportunity to do this.

I had done my best to win Moscow Mendeleev Institute's competition so I could become an exchange student at Tufts. It was necessary for me to study hard to get mostly A's and several B's and to win the English competition. It was a kind of round-table discussion of a topic previously unknown to me, but I succeeded. Furthermore, I passed my State Exam in English (I got an excellent mark).

There had been a lot of obstacles before I entered this wonderful country. It was necessary to book the ticket three months before the departure date. I also had to get permission to leave the Soviet Union for four months and the visa to enter the US Embassy in Moscow. Of course, in most European countries such things are not problems at all, but in Russia it was very hard to do everything. Everything became clear only on the Aug. 30. And the next day at 11:30 p.m., I left my flat in Moscow to start my journey to the United States.

It was a long trip. From Moscow airport to Shannon, Ireland, after that to Gander airport in Canada; three hours later I arrived at JFK airport, and finally Logan.

My first hours on the American land... I'll never forget them. I'll never forget those American people who have been taking care of me since my arrival. I'll remember my first night under the "American sky" that I spent in Hillside dormitory. The next day I told myself, "My dream has become reality!"

I have three months more in Medford campus as an exchange student from Russia. I've already become acquainted with a lot of people here. Most of them take care of me in everything I need. "Can I help you?" they ask me, if I have any problems. They explained to me how to use the automated teller machine--I had never used one before. I've become real friends with the boys and girls living in the Russian House. We spend our weekends together, walking around Boston.

I would never have expected that many people here would know and understand the domestic problems and changes taking place in Russia now. And that is why nowadays I explore not only this country itself but the American people. And I like them. I have shared many ideas about US-Russian

Differences must be bridged

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relations since I've come here.
We must be friends.

It's a great pleasure for me to continue my investigation of the American life. It's always useful to learn something about events and people around you, as we often say at home. And it's twice as useful to study the way of thinking of the people around you because it'll show you the future. Russia is on the way towards democracy and the market economy now, and maybe one day our countries will be more similar. But our peoples are similar even now: everybody wants to make friends. And we are making friends despite all differences, difficulties, and problems. And I am glad to be one of the representatives of the Russian Republic in the American land. I'm exploring America.