about ignorant Americans who had allegedly asked her if Germany had electricity! The idiocy of that comment actually took my breath away. Unfortunately, she rather ruined my subsequent attempt at sympathyby saying, "It's not like I'm from Bangladesh, where people live in trees"!

My friend Jayant Kripalani said (after I told him this story), that whenever I come across such morons I should respond by saying "We do live in trees. And we also go to schools on caparisoned elephants - but haps? Or just bonkers? A friend of mine once told me that the secretariat of the Queen of England had requested chefs not to put garlic in her food during a trip to Italy. If Queen Elizabeth doesn't have the good taste to appreciate garlic, then the less said about that the better. But while such a request from royalty might be accommodated despite the annoyance, coming from a random non-royal European in a Chinese restaurant, it's undoubtedly a lot worse.



Soviet postal stamp showing brotherhood among races.

always with our retinue of at least fifteen personal retainers." That, he feels, would put people like this in their place. But I fear he is too optimistic.

Anyway, more recently, I was at a rather upmarket Chinese restaurant, when the ubiquitous nature of this kind of casual racism was brought home to me yet again. A Frenchman sitting two tables down from us loudly insisted on having his dish made with basmati rice instead of jasmine rice. Demanding basmati rice in a Chinese restaurant would have been bad enough, but the guy then compounded his sins by sternly instructing the waiter not to serve him anything with soy sauce in it! How could anyone say this in a Chinese restaurant, I wondered. Was he culturally confused, per-

And while I didn't intervene to make the rude remark that was hovering on the tip of my tongue when I overheard this man's soy sauce/basmati rice demands, I was deeply impressed by the response of another friend after she encountered a similar level of obnoxiousness a while ago. Tahera was at a mall in Houston, Texas when an elderly white man – looking around at all the Latino shoppers - addressed a question to her. That particular mall is known to be frequented by rich South Americans who fly in to shop there, but the white gentleman clearly didn't approve. Instead, he asked Tahera, "Where are all the real Americans?" She looked him straight in the eye and responded, "Sir, they are in the reservations." Well said, Tahera!