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## The specificity of negotiations with a Russian partner

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## **THE SPECIFICITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH A RUSSIAN PARTNER**

### **ABSTRACT**

Cultural differences impede the process of communication and negotiation. When negotiators come from different cultural backgrounds, the risk, that there is no agreement exists, increases manifold. Negotiations with the Russians are the art of becoming friends. All preconceptions that may over-emphasize the fear of starting a relationship with a Russian partner disappear after first successful negotiations, because Russia has an incredible power of attraction that cannot be explained.

### **Key words**

Russian culture, business culture in Russia, international negotiations, business talks, stereotypes

### **1. Introduction**

In all spheres of human life, the communication process is closely related to conducting conversation that often leads to negotiations. Negotiation is “a sequence of mutual moves by which the parties aim to achieve the most favorable solution of partial conflict of interest.”<sup>1</sup> Effective negotiations are primarily a creative communication and efforts to agree on a common point of view. The risk, however, that there is no agreement exists in every negotiation, domestic and foreign. When negotiators come from different cultural backgrounds that risk increases manifold. Cultural differences divide businessmen from different

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<sup>1</sup> G. Rosa, *Komunikacja i negocjacje w biznesie* [Communication and Negotiations in Business], Szczecin 2009, p. 79.

countries. Culture encompasses overall achievements of the community, which are passed from generation to generation, including beliefs, patterns of conduct, rules of coexistence.

Cultural differences not only impede the process of communication and negotiation, but also affect the interpretation of the objective of negotiations, the negotiating posture, negotiation style, communication, timing, emotional involvement, organization of negotiations and risks which are undertaken. The cultural factor, as an important element in international negotiations, determines the behavior of individuals more than any other demographic and organizational variables. It determines the interpretation of verbal and non-verbal symbols.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge of cultural differences and cultural background of the partner allows the negotiator to communicate, understand, plan and predict more effectively. The use of this knowledge on a very specific market, which is the Russian market, allows to achieve a competitive advantage over other foreign companies doing business in this country. Note, however, that stereotypes are not the best way to understand the existing differences. It is important to lay the foundations of precise and systemizing thinking about cultural differences and using it in the negotiations.

## **2. Before you start the talks, the thing about Russian culture**

Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of area, one of the largest economies in the world and has the world's largest natural resources and energy sources. Because of these conditions Russia plays a significant role in world politics and is a huge economic market. Furthermore, Russia is not an ethnically homogenous country so during negotiation one may come into contact with people of different personalities, cultures and nationalities.

The negotiation is all about predicting what the opponent's reaction will be. Negotiations are called a psychological game because each action of one party

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<sup>2</sup> See more broadly: B. Jamrożek, *Komunikacja interpersonalna* [Interpersonal Communication], Poznań 1997; E. Thiel, *Mowa ciała* [Body Language], Wrocław 1994; Z. Nęcki, *Komunikacja międzyludzka* [Interpersonal Communication], Warszawa 1996; B. Nogalski, P. Jarocki, *Komunikacja niewerbalna w negocjacjach międzynarodowych. Uwarunkowania kulturowe* [Nonverbal Communication in International Negotiations. Cultural Conditions], Bydgoszcz 1998; V.F. Birkenbihl, *Sygnaty ciała* [Body Signals], Wrocław 1998.

triggers a responding action of the negotiation opponent. In the negotiations, it is important to predict what move the opponent will make and conduct the negotiations in such a way as to achieve the desired goal.<sup>3</sup> However, predicting negotiations with Russians is not an easy task. Some people maintain that it is extremely difficult to predict what our Eastern neighbors plan because “even Muscovite does not know what the other Muscovite is thinking.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, before any talks begin, it is worth learning what typical negotiation behaviors of our Eastern neighbor are.

Please note that in dealing with the East, Polish negotiators should, on the one hand, act naturally, guided by intuition saying that Poles and the Russians share a “common Slavic soul” but, on the other hand, based on past and current political events and Polish-Russian relations, it is recommended to adopt conservative attitude. Polish negotiators must also get rid of some past stereotypes and prejudice which may affect their perception of the Russians in the communication process.

To communicate effectively, professional negotiators must always remember during negotiation about three things: their own words and actions, what meaning and importance is given to them by the opponent, and his words and actions. Negotiators should therefore predict possible consequences of own statements and actions before words are uttered, and any gesture is made. When people from two different cultures come together for the first time, they do not have a common core of information which allows them to interpret their statements, actions and intentions in an appropriate manner.

The Russians are “open-minded, painfully honest and say almost everything they think and think what they say. Therefore they behave quite differently than people from most partner-oriented cultures, in which an allusive, context-embedded language is commonly used.”<sup>5</sup> Russian culture is highly hierarchical, but at the same time one of the most recognized values is egalitarianism, referred to as *uravnilovka* (leveling). The Russians deeply resent it when others have more than they do. Russian formality is relatively high and shows up in the way people

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<sup>3</sup> J. Penc, *Komunikacja i negocjacje w organizacji* [Communication and Negotiations in Organization], Warszawa 2010, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> A. Szczypiorski, *Początek* [Beginning], Warszawa 1986, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> R.R. Gesteland, *Różnice kulturowe, a zachowania w biznesie* [Cultural Differences and Behavior in Business], Warszawa 2000, p. 205.

dress and in their greeting and farewell rituals. Russians are characterized by variable expressiveness.<sup>6</sup>

Russian culture belongs to the culture circle of human relationships. The Russians do not care about general principles of negotiations or fair play. The key to do business with them is to gain their trust and friendship. By doing this one can achieve a lot. In addition, what counts for Russians is connections, so they observe if you know the right people, have the right contacts. Since the days of the Soviet Union, Russians have been using the notion of *blat*<sup>7</sup> and *znakomstvo* to describe connections (access) to acquire rare goods or other benefits – in the Russian culture those terms are similar in usage to the notion of *guanxi* in the Asian culture. Therefore, Russians appreciate small courtesies. The best way to get closer to the Russian partner is to have a conversation on private matters, show photos of your children, drink few bottles of vodka and generally show a human face. Knowledge of Russian culture, i.e. poetry, art and ballet is appreciated. It is important for them to know who they are dealing with, because if they do not trust, they do not make a deal only for mere benefits. In addition, it is good if the negotiating parties have common friends. Recommendations from friends prove to be effective both for companies and the leader of the negotiating group. If someone, whom our Russian partner trusts, says: “this is the man you can talk to,” it will be half of the future success. In Russia a bribe may be a useful tool to start a friendship. Despite the fact that in the West such a way of “gratitude” is treated as corruption, in Russia it is often the only way to finalize a deal with a State-owned company.

There is a stereotype around the world that the Russians love vodka and other strong liquors. However, in recent years the structure of alcohol consumption in Russia has changed considerably. Compared to previous years, we can observe a distinct growth in the share of beer and other low-alcohol beverages in the total consumption of alcohol. It is worth underlining that almost every Russian knows basic principles of drinking strong alcohol. The most important thing

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<sup>6</sup> See: M. Kendlik, *Negocjacje międzynarodowe* [International Negotiations], Warszawa 2009, pp. 135–144; G. Rosa, op.cit., pp. 160–161; R.R. Gesteland, op.cit., pp. 204–209.

<sup>7</sup> *Blat* (Russian: *блат, blat*) is a term which appeared in the Soviet Union to denote the use of informal agreements, exchanges of services, connections. The word was primarily used to describe business relationships, when people made each a favour in exchange for another favour. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blat\\_\(term\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blat_(term)) [access: 21.12.2012]; A.V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge 1998, p. 1.

while drinking vodka is having a snack, Thanks to this they are able to drink much more than foreigners. They do not use chasers with alcohol. Vodka is an integral part of life in Russia, but the Russians should not be absolutely treated as the nation of alcoholics.<sup>8</sup> The most common toast is *Za vashe zdorovye* (“To health”) and *Mir i Druzhiba* (“Peace and friendship”).

It must be remembered that an average Russian is not a pauper. He has enough to live on, is able to put aside a portion of his salary, go on vacation, pay for children’s education etc. Salaries in Russia are growing very fast due to economic growth in this country in the last few years. The standard of living is increasing year after year.

Russians also belong to an affective culture in which emotions are openly expressed. On the one hand some may, in accordance with the collectivist culture, say what others want to hear, but on the other hand they – as Slavs – say that they know something well and are able to do it, while in fact they do not understand and do not have the faintest idea what to do.

Russian formality is evidenced by the rituals associated with greetings and farewells, dress code and the hierarchy of society. It is especially important to observe the required degree of formality at the first meeting, i.e. to be dressed properly and behave appropriately. Men are not used to interacting with women on the basis of equality. Therefore, during negotiation a woman can expect courtesy, but must be prepared that on the professional field she may be ignored.<sup>9</sup>

Russians do not pay attention to punctuality. They try to arrive on time, but they rarely are. Time is not converted by them into money. In Russia, time is an “unlimited commodity,” which is why meetings are dragged, suspended, may not proceed according to the agreed timetable. There is no custom of setting the end time of the meeting. However, we should arrive on time and each meeting should be agreed in advance, appointments should be confirmed in writing and by telephone. It is also recommended that the day before the meeting we confirm arrival and arrange technical aspects of the visit.

Russians definitely prefer the oral form of communication. Phone calls are the way to maintain good personal relations only, talking about business on the phone should be avoided (in Russian culture, there is no custom of calling back – it is the calling person who should make phone calls to get in touch). Therefore, if you want to deliver any information do not rely on fax, mail or

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<sup>8</sup> Ł. Szul, *Stereotypy na temat Rosji i Rosjan* [Stereotypes about Russia and Russians], [http://www.rosjapl.info/rosja/stereotypy\\_rosji.php](http://www.rosjapl.info/rosja/stereotypy_rosji.php) [access: 25.12.2012].

<sup>9</sup> See: R.R. Gesteland, op.cit., p. 206.

e-mails, but do it in person. Negotiators from a cultural zone which is based on the written word (European culture) should pay more attention to what Russian partners say than to what they write. Written offers must be confirmed in person. For Russians, an agreement in writing is sometimes less important than the one agreed in the oral form. At the same time, in Russian culture documents with multiple seals play a role.

Important information that should be acquired before starting the talks is who makes the decision on the part of the Russian partner. As already mentioned, the hierarchy plays an important role in Russia and decisions are often made individually, usually by people who have an impact on the financing of companies and institutions.

In Russia, it is very difficult to investigate the financial condition of a potential partner, but you must try to get as much information about the other side as possible. Often, though, what we see may be misleading. Many Russian companies are on the verge of bankruptcy, trying to keep the image of a thriving company. Eastern market differs from Western markets which aim at full transparency in their finances. In Russia, financial information is treated as personal information. Therefore, by the time relations become friendly, provision of reliable information should not be expected. An explanation to such reluctance to talk about financial situation may be unfriendly tax system and avoidance of paying taxes as well as relics of the old era.

In general, Russian market is tough, but as in the Eastern cultures, the most time-consuming are the first negotiations. If we earn the trust of our eastern partner at the initial phase of negotiations, then we can expect that over the years we will be doing good business.

### **3. Business talks: from the first meeting to execution of the agreement**

While negotiating with Russians it is important to carefully select members of the negotiating group. Since Russia is a highly hierarchical country, status of group members is very important. The group should speak with one voice and should have a clear leader who is authorized to make decisions. Group members should be patient, extremely tolerant and should not respond to provocations. Negotiating group needs to be familiar with the code of ethics and boundaries of what is acceptable in order to avoid surprises since you may come across unethical and illegal proposals in Russia. To gain respect from our Russian

partner, we must show that we have the power and authority to make decisions. Otherwise, the talks will be treated as temporary and impersonal, and – in the worst case – offensive.

In official dealings it is obligatory to call your partner “Sir” (*Gospodin*). The names of Russians are made up of three parts: first name, a patronymic, i.e. one’s father’s name (*otchestvo*) and last name. The Russians use plural form (“you”) to address someone from outside their family and friends. They tend to quickly drop the official, rigid rules and replace them with informal, cordial forms. However, at the first meeting the title and last name should be used, not the first name. When introducing yourself you should use your last name only. You are allowed to use your Russian partner’s first name only if he or she suggests it.

When greeting a Russian partner you should shake his hand. Russian version is a firm handshake with several pumps. In general, the older person or a woman extends the hand first. Already at the first meeting we can observe what relations exist between people, relatives and old friends, hug and kiss each other’s cheeks. Physical contact such as touching or patting on the back is uncommon between strangers and may be considered offensive. When you are being introduced or introducing yourself, remember about an eye contact. Eye contact should be maintained throughout the greeting. What should also be remembered is that the Russians are superstitious and never kiss or extend their hands over the doorstep because it may lead to breaking off the relationship.

As elsewhere in the World, it is common in Russia to use business cards. It is recommended for foreigners to print business cards both in one’s mother tongue or in English and on the other side in Russian (Cyrillic). Business cards should contain all important information, including all titles that reflect our business position or professional qualifications. We should be prepared that our Russian partner may not have business cards to hand out. It will be not a problem for them.

Before you take your place at the negotiating table, you should be aware of cultural differences. During conversation try to make use of them to achieve certain business goals. Reticence, lack of invention or – at first glance – lack of preparation may be misinterpreted. Russians treat negotiations as a chess game, calculating several moves ahead and trying to predict what the opponent will do. Of course, the way they calculate their moves and the used strategies are typical for their culture.

At the first meeting, people should maintain more formal relations and choose an elegant outfit. Before starting business talks the Russians usually engage in small talk about weather or his partner’s journey.



The first meeting is used for a better understanding of the partners, establishing personal relations, and at most, the initial presentation of the offer. It should not be expected that any of the key decisions will be taken during the first visit. The best strategy at the first meeting is to make a confident impression, while maintaining the warm atmosphere with cordiality and availability. During the visits, it is worth noting that we have chosen our partner because we believe that it is the best partner, and should ensure our Russian partner about the exclusivity of the talks.

The Russians appreciate gifts, so be generous when buying all kinds of gifts or when you invite your Russian partner home. Until recently, even quite ordinary items were very welcomed if they differed in appearance or style from what was available on the Russian market. Currently, the supply of consumer goods has improved, but in turn, the high prices of branded western products make them inaccessible to ordinary citizens, which means that what is “nice, large and modern” still makes an impression. However, this is not the case with business people. In a business environment gifts must be sophisticated or generally accepted. Gifts should be handed in during snack or at the end of the meeting. Appropriate and generally accepted gifts include: branded alcohol (e.g. a good French cognac), sweets associated with the home country of the person giving them, albums, and advertising materials which should be ordered for a specific customer (e.g. good quality pens, calendars, elegant business card holders etc.). Do not give gifts such as scarves, knives and watches. Scarves mean tears, knives – enemies, and clocks – separation. Flowers as a gift should be given to women only. Please note that you should not give an even number of flowers (bring bad luck) or yellow flowers (mean betrayal and signify the end of the relationship). Instead of buying a dozen roses thirteen should be bought.<sup>10</sup> People who have been invited into the Russian partner’s home should bring flowers for the hostess and alcohol for the host. The receipt of such a invitation in Russia is considered to be an honor and a proposal to establish closer personal relationships.

Russian negotiators display both expressive and restrained behavior. At the first meeting, you can expect a peaceful, diplomatic manners, and during subsequent sessions – more demonstrative behavior: emotional outbursts and displays of temper at critical moments of discussion, abrupt exchange of views

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<sup>10</sup> *Dziwne przesady na świecie – Japonia, Grecja, Rosja, Polska i inne* [Strange Superstitions in the World – Japan, Greece, Russia, Poland and Other], <http://podroze.gazeta.pl/podroze/56,114158,10728796,Rosja,,3.html> [access: 28.12.2012].

and discussion on controversial issues, questions of a personal nature as well as personal confidences.<sup>11</sup>

During the talks the possibility of linguistic inaccuracy should be taken into account. To prevent misunderstanding caused by different interpretation of certain terms, it is important to clarify and simplify business terminology. Russians often use metaphors, proverbs, abbreviations, sometimes vulgarisms. When they say: "No problem," they usually mean that the issue does not deserve special attention, and when they say: "It will be very difficult," they mean that it will be done (the promise), but it requires significant effort.

Generally it is accepted that Russian is a trade language when doing business in Russia, so the conversation should be conducted in their native language. We cannot expect that we will be able to successfully communicate and make a deal in English. If we have any problems with communicating in Russian, we should use a professional translator to overcome the language barrier. This may, however, be an obstacle to establishing good personal relations. Keep also in mind that avoiding conversations in English may be one of the negotiation tactics, thanks to which Russians gain advantage.

If Russian contractors want to show respect to the other side they listen carefully, do not interrupt, avoid gestures of understanding, do not smile. They give the impression that everything is understood, while it may be quite different. The reason for this is that during the discussion Russians do not ask too many questions. In their culture, asking questions is a sign of ignorance, which is why Russians, even if they do not comprehend something, do not clarify their doubts. Although Russians are very tolerant of foreign guests refrain from asking too many specific questions that are of key importance if you want to save face.

If our contractor trusts us, we may be invited to the sauna (in Russian *banya*) or restaurant. Such an invitation is treated as a way to build a personal bond or as a gesture of friendship. It is generally not recommended to refuse the invitation. During the long hours of stay in the sauna Russians spend at most half an hour in the hot vapor and the rest at the table, eating, drinking and discussing.

While you are in a restaurant, food and drink should not be refused. We must remember that Russians do not get drunk during the negotiations. They can make us drunk instead. A man trying to stay sober is sometimes treated with suspicion. Preferred topic of conversation is private life. Avoid complaining about the living conditions in Russia, the Tsar and the debate on the monarchy, war, ethnic minorities, Chechnya, religion, collapse of the USSR, and do not

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<sup>11</sup> R.R. Gesteland, op.cit., p. 207.

compare Russia with other countries. In Russia, sitting on the table announces death and poverty. It is considered bad luck to keep an empty bottle on the table, so when it is finished Russians immediately place it under the table. In addition in Russia do not borrow and do not lend money in the evening.<sup>12</sup>

Draft of the agreement must be prepared in advance. Then it shall be easier to discuss various points. During the talks we may immediately add all necessary amendments. Thank to this we will not miss anything. In fact, the wording of the contract must be clear and transparent to avoid misinterpretation (Russians like to insist on their interpretation). Pay attention to clauses regarding payment deadlines and enforcement of contractual penalties for delays in payment. These clauses require precise wording.<sup>13</sup>

As already mentioned, Russians place a high value on personal relations and relationships. The uncertainty of the economic situation and atmosphere of distrust, forces them to take very cautious actions against the contractor. Russians generally represent a double standard in ethical behavior (we and alien people). They are guided by the highest standards of morality within their private network of relationships (the case of “our”), at the same time, the same people feel very comfortable violating any ethical rules in their relations with “outsiders” (it’s relatively easy for them to be dishonest, they do not keep their commitments, etc.). The talks must therefore emphasize similarities rather than differences.<sup>14</sup>

Russians prefer an exclusive business relationship. Foreign negotiators often take the wrong track telling the Russian partner about discussions held with other companies to negotiate better terms. This tactic, although in some cases can be effective, is generally perceived as a lack of respect and a reluctance to establish good relations. It may also happen that Russians after an effusive introduction come to the conclusion that the case cannot be resolved. They simply want to study the opponent’s arguments and attitude.

The offer or presentation of the company should be very visual/graphical. Remember to attach folders and brochures. Russians are a visual type of people. Folders should be translated into Russian. The translation should contain the

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<sup>12</sup> *Dziwne przesady na świecie...*, op.cit.

<sup>13</sup> B. Papierkowska-Bielutin, *Negocjacje w Rosji, czyli co powinieneś wiedzieć zanim wsiądziesz do samolotu* [Negotiations in Russia, which Is what You Should Know before You Get on the Plane], <http://www.stoisko.pl/?p0=73&p1=77&o=2697> [access: 28.12.2012].

<sup>14</sup> See more: P. Dąbrowski, *Praktyczna teoria negocjacji* [Practical Negotiation Theory], Warszawa 1990; J.W. Salacuse, *Negocjacje na rynkach międzynarodowych* [Negotiations in International Markets], Warszawa 1994.

name of the company or partner for which it was “specifically” made. A common tactic is to invite partners to present their point of view, which is not a courtesy, but a way to gain time. Keep in mind that too simple solutions can be adopted with great suspicion, because our Russian partners do not believe in simple things, always searching for hidden pitfalls. Presentation of the offer should not be started with a joke, as recommended by the so-called “American school” of public speaking. It is important to show that we take business seriously, and focus on facts and technical details. It is also important to make sure that our Russian partners properly understand the offer, because they usually do not ask questions. It is obvious that the first offer will never be accepted by the Russian side, so it is our task to modify it. Russians rarely come with any initiative, idea or suggestion. Sometimes, when you have questions concerning the provisions of the contract, our partner will be silent, particularly if we ask a general question such as “what would you change in the agreement?” Therefore, you need to think about it in advance. Consider how to ask questions so as not to offend the partner, and how to formulate them so as to elicit the kind of information required. In Russia, asking questions like “do you understand?” is an expression of lack of respect and good manners.

Already Maxim Maximovich Litvinov, a Russian politician and diplomat in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century came up with a simple tactic by which he degraded his opponents, namely he never put concrete proposals on the table. He just reacted to what Americans did. This common tactic has survived to the present day. In a more developed form, in the final stage of negotiations the Russians deliberately “add” new ideas and new topics and therefore expect further concessions.

The Russians see negotiations as “win-win” only with friends. Otherwise, take a “winner-loser” position. Since in Russia “to step-down” means “to lose” and “to lose” means “to lose face and authority,” you cannot count on the success of the negotiations at the first meeting with a new partner. Most Russians see compromise as something morally wrong. Meeting the partner “halfway” does not give them satisfaction. What is more, the Russians look upon compromise as a sign of moral weakness. In their opinion, compromise is reached not because a party can afford it, but because it is forced to do so. So, be careful to start negotiations from such a position so that in the end the Russian partner has the opportunity to step down less than half the difference between the starting positions.<sup>15</sup> A Russian negotiator will give in only when he meets a strong partner.

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<sup>15</sup> P. Wójcik, *Kultura rosyjskiego biznesu* [Russian Business Culture], <http://www.pawel.wojcik.com/rosja.html> [access: 12.05.2010].

However, be careful not to go too far. The Russian soul is extremely sensitive on the point of honour.

To exasperate and tire the other side, the Russians can use the technique of “putting the heat on” the opponent, whereby a tough, sometimes confrontational, approach is used. The Russians emphasise their point of view by: slamming a fist on the table, threats, attacks of anger, emotional outbursts, putting the partner in a situation where there is no way out, etc. By doing this, they hope that their opponent accepts less favorable conditions just to bring the talks to an end. In fact, the expression of emotions may be deliberate and controlled.

Some Russian negotiators also use elements of the “Soviet” style of bargaining and manifesting their strength, techniques of “softening” partner by threatening to break off the talks. They often attack the weakest point of the opponent. Therefore, the opposing party must demonstrate a high patience, tolerance, resistance to negotiations, a good preparation for the talks.<sup>16</sup> One of the most common tactics used by Russian negotiators is also the technique of “bad-good negotiator.” It is reserved, however, for the Russian side only. They do not like when “the heat is put on” them, or when they have to cope with the moods of the other side. If they are brought into such a situation, they start to act emotionally, which can lead to the breakdown of the talks. As they appreciate high professionalism, the technique of “lack of competence” will not bring the expected results, either.

On the one hand, the Russians are masters when it comes to negotiations on the edge. They often create crises situations and conflicts, but when the problems appear and the other party begins to haggle, express a different opinion or make unforeseen proposals, then their emotions win, they forget about the rules and get irritated. We no longer see a professional negotiator, but a person full of resentment, a person with his habits and beliefs.

Remember to draw a “protocol” at the end of the negotiations. It will be helpful while solving possible misunderstandings and problematic issues.

After signing the contract, you can expect that the Russians will try to renegotiate it or even withdraw from the transaction, usually because they are not able to fulfill the terms of the contract. This, however, should not discourage us to cooperate with other companies and institutions.

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<sup>16</sup> R.R. Gesteland, op.cit., p. 209. See more: E. Lewandowski, *Rosyjski Sfinks, Rosjanie wśród innych narodów* [Russian Sphinx, the Russians among Other Nations], Warszawa 1999, pp. 59–86; W.G. Makjejeva, *Kultura prjetprinimatjelstwa* [Culture of Prjetprinimatjelstwo], Moskwa 2002, pp. 53–63.

## 4. Summary

Negotiations with the Russians are the art of becoming friends. Unfortunately, there is no one proven method for achieving it. Serious talks with a Russian partner are prepared for months, with many professionals engaged. They examine extreme possibilities. The negotiating table is for the Russians a mere formality, the final stage of the game. They sit at it when they think that the negotiations will not be a waste of time. Russia is a country of highly hierarchical society, with power distance and centralization. Russian negotiators like to test the strength of the opponent, his determination. They have a tendency to make 180-degree turns and they want to demonstrate their supremacy at every stage of the negotiations.

Polish-Russian relations – maybe not today, but in a few years – should start improving. We and Russians are really alike. The Russians think about Poles positively.<sup>17</sup> They perceive our country as a better place to live than Russia, but in fact, they know very little about us. It is worth to note that the so-called Polish stereotype of the Russians is much worse than the Russian stereotype of Poles.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it should be underlined that all preconceptions that may over-emphasize the fear of starting a relationship with a Russian partner disappear after first successful negotiations, because Russia has an incredible power of attraction that cannot be explained.

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<sup>17</sup> The most common associations are close neighbor, brother Slavs, “our” in Europe, beautiful women, Catholics, the policy (14%) (here mainly Smolensk disaster – 9%). See more: *Institute of Public Affairs report “Poland and Germany in the eyes of the Russians.” Research conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs with the support of Moscow’s Levada Center had to show what Russians think about the Poles and Germans.*

<sup>18</sup> T. Horbowski, *Rosjanie o Polakach: choć się nie znamy, to się lubimy... trochę* [The Russians about the Poles: Although We Don’t Know Each Other, We Like Each Other... a Little] <http://eastbook.eu/2012/06/material/news/rosjanie-o-polakach-choc-sie-nie-znamy-to-sie-lubimy-troche> [access: 26.12.2012]; Z. Szczerek, *Co naprawdę Rosjanie sądzą o Polakach?* [What the Russians Really Think about the Poles?] [http://fakty.interia.pl/tylko\\_u\\_nas/news/co-naprawde-rosjanie-sadza-o-polakach,1808169,3439](http://fakty.interia.pl/tylko_u_nas/news/co-naprawde-rosjanie-sadza-o-polakach,1808169,3439) [access: 24.12.2012].