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The following transcript is from a presentation given to the Gulf Coast Chapter of the International Counsel on Systems Engineering on March 12, 1998, at South Shore Harbour, League City, TX. The subject is "Living and Working in Russia, with Russians!"

Lutomski: ...

Tonight I'd like to talk about living and working in Russia, with Russians. I'll explain a little later what I mean when I say "with Russians," and why I don't just say "living and working in Russia."

But tonight I wanted to start talking about Russian culture in general, and then do more stuff sort of related to, but not directly to what I did there. Some of you people if you're going to be working with the Russians, or if you've already worked with them you'll understand a little bit more what I'm talking about. I'll talk about what the culture is like at the workplace, which is markedly different than working in an American company or in an American location, and I will address personal safety as well. My favorite subject is negotiating with Russians, and then I'll even give away a few secrets of how to work with Russians more successfully, talk about resources that they have over there. It explains a lot of things when you work with them. And then a little bit about myself, and then I'll end with sort of some recommended readings, if people are interested more in understanding Russia, or want to understand a little bit about the changes they're going through, and the history, and that kind of stuff.

Speaking about talking about Russians, that's the one thing the Russians love to do, is just talk endlessly. They can just talk and talk and talk. They mostly just tell jokes and stories, and jokes and stories, and stories, and stories, and jokes. So I'll get back to that in a little bit.

But before I started, I wanted to get a little feel for who's in the room so I can sort of slant the presentation one way or another. First of all, is there any Russians in the audience? [Laughter] Okay, no Russians. Because when you talk about culture or talking about living in a foreign country, you have to speak in generalizations and stereotypes, and, of course, they're not 100 percent true, they're based on things you observe and things that are different from American culture. To be fair, I'll also talk about American culture, and the way the rest of the world views Americans, and what they think about us that may be a surprise to some of you, and it not be.

But does anybody know any gross generalizations they hear everyday in life, just as an example?

Audience Member: You mean about the Russians?

Lutomski: No, about yourselves, about anything, just any generalization.

Audience Member: They like hot showers and cold beer.

Lutomski: Yes, yes, that's true. One thing you hear over and over, especially in America, you always hear women talk about men. They say, "Oh, all men are pigs." I keep telling my wife, "But I don't have a tail; it's not true." But I could say, being a member of the male gender, it's probably only 40, maybe 60 percent of us. So it's not true. These are generalizations we're talking about. So anyways, I think you get my point.

How many of you have been to Russia before? Okay, two of you. How many people think they'll be traveling in the future to Russia? Oh, that's good, so a lot of people. Okay, good, good.

One thing I wanted to start talking about is the media. It's amazing when you--I guess I didn't really realize it when I lived in America, but when you're over there you realize that Western culture and Western media, they have an obsession with Russian news, and all the news bureaus from every place in the whole world is in Moscow, and there's a large syndicated news network, sort of like CNN, in Europe it's called Euro News. You cannot watch a broadcast without at least one story about Russia. Somewhere in Siberia something crazy's happening, or Moscow, or unrest with the Chechans [phonetic], or they love--everyone's favorite subject is the Russian mafia. CNN, of course, is always covering news in Russia and Moscow, and the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* here, more international newspapers, they really have a definite obsession with it.

I think a lot of the reason the Russians are fascinating to us is because they are so similar to us. It's this huge country that spans this whole continent of Asia, and actually they say Russia is one-sixth the land mass of the world, which is impressive, because that's not the Soviet Union, because it was a lot bigger, then this is only Russia, so it doesn't include Kazakhstan and the Ukraine, which are huge land masses. So it's like America. You have this huge continent, and they're very nationalistic like us, and they are also, a lot of ways, sort of imperialistic.

The Russians have influenced world history like the Americans have. They've exported the Korishnikov [phonetic] rifle, spread it around the world, and we export TV shows like CHiPs and Eric Estrada everywhere. [Laughter] There's a lot of similar--and they're a strong country that influences a lot of things. They look the same as us. You know, you see a Russian, and they may dress differently, but actually that changes more and more every day. You can't even tell them apart. They look like us, but you realize that there's a lot of differences there, and mostly the differences are in the culture and how they think and how they behave.

To be honest, the obsession with Russia is understandable, because it is fascinating, and it can be a strange and interesting place to read about and that kind of stuff. Of course, there's the Cold War, they are

the other nuclear power, so there's a lot of reasons for it. But in general, what I've found out is the stories you hear about Russia will be based on a kernel of truth or on a true event or something, but then they'll just sort of blow it out of proportion and sensationalize it. I guess my first warning to all of you would be, read about Russia and just keep in mind that it's probably just exaggerated a little bit, and it's probably not going to be all the way true.

Sort of like a lot of you work in the space industry, which is also a very visible industry, and you read about it in the *Space News* or *Aviation Week* or the *Houston Chronicle*. You read through there and go, "Oh, that's totally inaccurate." Well, that's what it's like whatever you read in the things. It's based on something, but sometimes they don't have all the facts about it. So don't believe everything you read about Russia. I'll talk a little bit more about that later when I talk about personal safety when traveling or living or working in Russia.

Has anybody taken that cross-cultural training class at NASA? It's an excellent, excellent class. It's just an amazing class. I really enjoyed it. I actually took it twice. The first time I took it, I only had a little bit of contact with the Russians, and then the second time I took it, after I worked with the Russians for about two years, I realized it sort of was like two different classes. You sort of understand it at a totally different level. Like a lot of you that are going to start working with the Russians, you might remember some of the things I talk about tonight and you'll go, "Oh, yes, now I know what he was talking about." So after you've sort of lived it, it's a whole different kind of thing.

But I mean, just briefly, this is like--I'm not going to talk that much about culture and that kind of stuff, but when you study cross-cultural training, they always talk about icebergs. I figured it was also appropriate because the most popular movie in the world now is the "Titanic." We had to throw the Titanic in here, too.

But it is a good analogy, because icebergs--I don't know the percentage, but most of the mass and the size of the iceberg is down here below the water, so you don't see anything. So we see Russians, or we see French, you see Koreans or something, and you just see a small part of the whole thing, and you think, "Oh, that guy, he looks like me. He's got a tie and a jacket on, he's eating with a fork and knife, we're really similar." Where you might see an Asian eating with chopsticks, or a North African eating with their fingers, and like, oh, that's just really strange, or a guy with a turban on, that's really strange. You just see the top part. Even though you think, "Oh, well, they're just like us," you forget that all their ideas and their prejudice and their views of family and marriage, and all this kind of things that you can't really see are all hidden under there, hidden from you.

One thing you always learn about when you're working with people of different cultures, every

culture has their own rules. You never know what these rules are. You could theoretically study them, but the way you learn rules is by breaking them. You do something wrong, and all of a sudden everybody at the table is staring at you. And you're like, "What'd I do wrong?" They're like, "He's having the white wine with the meat. What's he doing, this heathen?" That's more of a French thing, probably. If you are just like me you would say, "I like white wine. Leave me alone." But you don't learn about until you break them.

Or like I once--there was a Russian woman visiting us, and I didn't put her coat on for her, and she just sort of stood by the door, and she had her shoes on. She just stood around, sort of making faces. I realized, "Oh, yes, I have to put her coat on." But you don't learn until you break them, and depending on who you're dealing with, it could be a serious violation, or they just forgive you, or they just grab their coat, and smirk and leave or something. You don't really learn these things until you break them. There's no way you're not going to break them. You're just going to do that, just something that you have to live with, but it's something you can watch for when you see them, suddenly their face gets a little funny, and they get up from the table of your negotiation and leave or something, you can always think, "I wonder what I did wrong?" But there's usually something you did wrong. Not wrong, but you broke one of their sort of rules, if you will. For them, it was something they didn't like.

I've also had a lot of personal experience with a different culture. My wife is Belgian, and what I realized with her is, we've been married six years now, and the interesting thing about people of other cultures is you never really get to understand everything that's hidden down here. With Americans, everybody has different shapes, but you sort of share a lot of the same ideas and values, and communicates in the same ways. I realize that culture is a bottomless pit. I spent two years in Russia and I can't say I did more than scratch the surface, but with my wife, you think, well, gees, six years been married, we have three children, you think, well, gosh, you know everything about your wife. I mean, every day is another discovery. The other day I was looking for my shoes--we had just moved back from Russia. I couldn't find my shoes. I said, "Where are my penny loafers?"

She's like, "Penny loafers?"

I go, "Yes, penny loafers."

Her niece in Belgium I remember had some of these and the big thing was sticking the pennies in them. I thought she understood what they were. I guess they had a different word for them, like "penny laufier" or something. I don't know. [Laughter] So I'm like, "Where are my penny loafers?"

She's like, "Penny loafers. Like a piggy bank?"

I'm like, "No, not a piggy bank. You know, shoes you stick coins in."

She's like, "Shoes you stick coins in?"

I go, "Okay, they're brown leather shoes."

She says, "Oh, like moccasins."

I go, "No! Where are my shoes?" [Laughter]

So, the discovery and the frustrations and the communication, you never get over it. It's a lifelong thing. With my wife, I think it makes a difference at what age they move abroad and what age your mind gets sort of set in one culture versus another. Because when you come over as a teenager and go to an American high school, I think you become probably 60 to 80 percent American. A lot of these things disappear.

But anyways, one thing they always describe about the cultures, too, is high context versus low context, and that's sort of a nebulous term. When they say "high context," they mean like sort of the unspoken information, and people who like to--examples of high context would be Russians, Mexicans, Italians, southern French people, people who'd rather sit around and talk all night, and just smoke and drink and talk, and tell jokes back and forth all night. These are, of course, generalizations.

Then the "low context" are people more like the Americans and the Germans and the Canadians that work is most important, and work, work, work, we have to get these things done, and then okay, the weekend we'll play hard. But we've got to work during the week. With the high-context cultures is sort of a stereotype, the family and the friends and your relationships are most important. If you go to work, you go to work. You go to lunch and have coffee, and you then have your cigarettes, and "Oh, we've got to go back to work for a few hours." So that's the kind of thing.

But the Russians are definitely the high context. They are most similar to what Americans have the stereotype of maybe Italians that sit around and bicker, and talk, and nonstop, over and over and over, and that kind of stuff. Russians, you always see them arguing. For them it's so ingrained in who they are and how they behave between each other. If you notice, next time you're with Russians, look at them how they talk to each other, just on the other side of the table, or during a smoke break they go out, and a lot of them will smoke or talk, even if they're not smoking, they'll go talk, and to see how they interact with each other. Just sort of silently look, and you'll see they're always telling each other how to do something, when to do it, and butting into somebody else's--"Don't sit there. What are you doing sitting there? Put the chair like this. Put the chair like this." Especially living there, you get to see this.

I spent a lot of time with Russians camping and stuff, and especially something like making a fire, because it's a macho thing. All guys know how to make a fire, and every guy knows how to make it better than the other guy. If the fire has a hard time getting starting or something, "Oh, get out of here. What are

you doing? You don't know what the heck you're doing. Let's start over. Let me do this." They're always arguing, and it's really shocking when you really see this. You're like, "How can they be so mean to each other?" They're just always yelling at each other.

The analogy I use is like it's a big country of brothers and sisters. I don't know what your family is like, if you were more like the Cleavers or more like the Bundys, but I know when I go home, I see my sisters maybe once a year, once every two years, and, "Oh, I love you. I miss you." Oh, yes, yes. After about four hours, you hear like, "Give me the remote control! Stop watching this stuff--" Arguing over the remote control, arguing over how to do something. It's more like the Bundy analogy, telling these people what to do, where to go, and all that kind of stuff.

But the thing I can't explain about Russians is, it's very, very true, but at the same time they're also some of the nicest, welcoming people like you've ever seen. If you see people sitting down in a bench or in the park or something, and you strike up small talk, ten minutes later you'll be sitting with them, and they'll be giving you tea and sandwiches and cheese, and saying, "Oh, please sit down. Please sit down." So it's really this unexplainable contrast of how they do it. Like you'll be in the train station trying to buy a ticket, and these babushkas will be up there elbowing you--a babushka means a grandmother--and they'll be elbowing you, or cutting across, or I'll be in line and they'll say, "Oh, excuse me, sir, I just have a small thing I need to ask her about. Can I cut in front of you?" I'll say--and I'm the stupid American--"Oh, please. Go right ahead." And she goes in there and then she'll be there for two hours. She has some problem and has to reissue the tickets. You just want to kill them.

But then when you get on the train, for instance, if you have a coupe [phonetic], and there will be four people in the coupe, within twenty minutes you're like best friends--not best friends, but you're getting along as if you were best friends, and you're sharing vodka and beer and juice and whatever else, and telling stories. It's like brothers and sisters sometimes. It's a positive brotherhood-sisterhood thing.

Let's see. One thing to keep in mind, too, with Russians it makes it difficult for us, is they're very, very suspicious of foreigners. They just have a natural distrust of foreigners. Because for their whole lives they've been told, well, foreigners are spies. They've been told that their neighbor is a spy. They're very suspicious because they know you're not one of them, and you have these strange behaviors, and you sort of violate some of their customs.

It's one thing you have to just keep in mind when you start working with them. The way to get over that, really, is just to do nothing. Just don't worry about it. Just totally ignore it. What I found is, you don't need to talk about it. Like if you're striking up a new relationship with a Russian, you don't need to try to show them how smart you are or be tough right away. Just sort of hang out with the guy. Just

continue the meeting. All it does it just takes time. It takes them a longer time than Americans. Americans, five minutes, "Oh, hi, how are you? Okay, let's get to work." You see it happen every day at work.

Finally, my own mind is sort of changing now. I actually find it rude the way Americans interact with each other. They'll sit down and say, "Oh, you're the specialist for life support. Well, I have this question, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was told to talk to you." Then halfway the sentences of rattling them off, then, "By the way, I'm Mike. What's your name?" You know? But you answer the questions, and you let him interrupt you no matter what you're doing. So anyways, I've sort of seen myself notice these things that before I would never even have noticed.

But anyway, with Russians you just have to be yourself, and it just takes time. Once they realize you're not going anywhere, and you're going to be their counterpart, then they'll slowly just accept you. But there's nothing--I guess the main advice is just don't do anything. It just takes time. You don't have to try to show off or try to be buddy-buddy with them, you just have to sort of exist, and sometimes after hours, sometimes weeks, sometimes years, they finally go, "Okay. He's an all-right guy. We can work with this guy."

I guess another generalization or stereotypes of Russians is they are extreme racist. It's amazing, especially coming from America where everything's politically correct, and we have to use the right words, and do this and that. But Russians, it's an extremely, extremely homogenous society. I never noticed it until I was living in Moscow for about six months, and I went to Paris. Oh, my gosh, there's black people, there's Arab people, there's Hispanic people here, there's even Americans here, all these people mixed together of all colors and size and shape. In Moscow, there's just a bunch of white folk for the most part.

I once made a friend with a woman who worked in a cafeteria. She had saw the first black person of her life from NASA coming to work in the Mission Control Center. She said, "You know, this girl, she's the first black person I ever met. You know what? She's really nice. She's really nice." She would just go on. You could just see the wonderment on her face. They had no exposure. They had never seen a black person. They've never seen Hispanic people.

They have a lot of prejudice. A good friend of mine, we were having dinner, and I said, "Oh, what language are they speaking? I've never heard that language." They're like, "Oh, we'll tell you later. We'll tell you later." So we were leaving the restaurant, they're, "Oh, those were people from Turkistan. Oh, God, they're terrible people. They do this, and they smell funny, and they do thit." They just went on, and on, and on. I'm just like, "Okay, never mind." [Laughter] It's one thing to worry about--not to worry about, but just to be aware of so you're not totally shocked and disgusted with your Russian counterpart.

It's just part of who they are.

Then of course, sexism is--you could talk about that for three hours--but extremely, by American standards, sexist. Or you could be nice and describe it as very traditional sex roles. It's sort of like it was like here, not fifty years ago, but maybe 100 years ago. The funny thing about it is that once the Communists took over in 1917, everything was equality--equality for women. So you know what the women did? They instantly worked. They joined the work force long before America, long before any Western country, the women joined the work force. But at the same time, they still did 100 percent of the cooking, 100 percent of the child care, 100 percent of the shopping, and today it hasn't changed much. When I say the women joined the work force, I don't mean they show up and they be schoolteachers and they be secretaries, like it started out in Western cultures. They had shovels and picks. I remember I watched a video of Russian history, and they interviewed this woman who was all excited about the Communist revolution and wanted to join the work force, and she wanted to go help build the Metro. So she shows up and she says, "Okay, I'm here to work. I want to build the Metro system." This is in the thirties when they started building it. She's like, "Where's the Metro? Where's the Metro?" They point to just an empty plot of land. They said, "It's right there. Here's your shovel,". [Laughter]

Even today you see it. You'll be so shocked. I still am shocked every day to see old women just doing manual labor, sweeping streets, shoveling snow. In America you would go, "Please, go, get back in the country club, retirement home, or go sit home and play with the grandkids." These women are like--[sound effects], and they're strong, too. You don't want to get these women angry at you.

The best way to describe life there, and the Russians will use this term, too. They say "*barba* [phonetic]" in Russian. It's a struggle. Life here is a struggle, and sometimes, unfortunately, to the day you die. I mean, the women there, unbelievable manual labor. It's just shocking, and sometimes appalling when you see the old women just doing incredible physical work and physical tasks and all that stuff.

Let's see. What else is there? I've got some more notes here. Oh, yes. I was going to talk a little bit more like the sexism and stuff, but we'll skip over that for now, but, yes, it's just amazing. It took me a long time to appreciate that this isn't like the kind of thing where the Russian women think, "Oh, this is not fair," or something. They sort of grew up with this as young children, and they see their mothers, and they see their grandmothers, and that's how you really learn these cultural roles and behaviors, you just watch. And so they grow up and it's just normal for them. They realize that in a lot of ways they have very low expectations of men. They sort of think of men as sort of a half step above an ape or a chimpanzee. That's true. I've talked about this with the Russians, and they all shake their heads and go, "Yes, that's about right." They're sort of like, "This poor pathetic thing. I have to take care of him, wash his clothes and feed

him, because otherwise he'd just die on the street." And in some ways it's true. [Laughter] So they sort of pamper them and take care of them.

So you see these Russian women, they're just--they do everything. They're just like superwomen. They work full time, and they do all the shopping, then they come home, and it's not that they have one kid or two kids, they've got the kids plus the husband they've got to take care of. A lot of times, of course, there's a lot of alcoholism, so there's domestic abuse, or he just sits on the couch and drinks, or whatever. So, by our standards, you just feel for these women. They're amazing. They still come to work dressed up really well, and smile and are cordial. It's just amazing. Amazing.

We'll talk a little bit about American culture. You mentioned something about a stereotype of American culture. Can anybody else sort of describe some of the American stereotypes that other people have about us?

Audience: Speed.

Lutomski: Yes, speed. Yes, we go, go, go, work. Work's the most important thing. We've got a jillion items to cover in our meeting. We've got to go, go, go. But people always describe Russians as sad people. You see them walking on the street and nobody smiles and they look down. Certainly, some of that comes from the Soviet Union, where, if you were happy, there's something wrong with you. You had too much money, too much success, too many women. Something was wrong with you. You had to go be hammered back down. You know the little blade that sticks up gets cut off. So some of that comes from that, but really Eastern Europeans are just more like that, too.

The stereotype of Americans is like a bunch of Mickey Mouses. You see Americans, it's not so much the way we dress that sticks us out, it's that we walk around the street and we smile. It's the smile. It's the smile. My wife still has a hard time understanding this. It's like, "Why do you keep smiling?" We all look like a bunch of Howdy Doody dolls walking around. "Hi, it's nice to meet you. It's really good to get to know you." For Russians and a lot of Europeans, to them it's sort of offensive, because to them it is so artificial to them. To us it's natural, and it's called friendliness and Southern hospitality, but to them it's sort of this artificial--"What are you so happy about? Just relax." Especially when Americans say--I'm sure you've experienced this, you meet somebody at a party, you shake hands, and then you go to another part of the party and you leave. They go, "Oh, it's so nice meeting you. It's so nice getting to know you." It's like, "Oh, bullshit. [Laughter] You didn't get to know me. You didn't get to meet me. We'd only said 'Hello,' then we said, 'goodbye.'"

For these high-context cultures, getting to know someone would take months, sometimes years to

get to know someone before you can say, "It was really good getting to know you and to be your friend." And they use those words, and they're really strong words for an American. Like it brings tears to your eyes. "I'm really glad we had this relationship and can be friends," and you're like, "Oh," because we're not used to talking that way. We're best friends after a beer. "He likes sports and I like sports. We've bonded." For Russians it takes time. Plus, they distrust the foreigners, like I talked about.

You just sort of realize in a lot of ways they're more closer to their human sides than a lot of us. We're all concentrating on the stock market and how much more we're making, our next promotion. These are, again, stereotypes of Americans. You realize with the Russians I learned about life. You realize, well, friendships, our kind, if you really get a true friend, that is something that can last forever. A friend to a Russian is how we use the word "true friends." If I asked you guys how many true friends you had in life, you'd say two, three, maybe, at the most. So maybe four, but that'd probably be weird. For the Russians and Europeans, that's how they use the word "friend." Before that stage, you're just what they call "*znakoma* [phonetic]," somebody I know.

Audience: An acquaintance.

Lutomski: An acquaintance. An acquaintance or co-worker. I mean, you can be a co-worker for twenty years, and they wouldn't be your friend. You see how they act to each other and you realize, yes, these are friends. [Laughter] I'm being a little extreme here, but this is sort of, from our perspective as Americans, that's really what it's like.

I was going to talk a little bit about Russian holidays. Some of the holidays are just really funny. The most important holiday in Russia, well, the biggest holiday is New Year's Eve by far. They don't have Christmas. Religion was sort of outlawed, and successfully, a lot of ways, destroyed by the Communists. They blew up the churches. They wanted to make Lenin, and especially Stalin the Gods, they referred to Stalin as the Uncle Stalin. They wanted to be the highest power and the highest influence. They didn't want anybody having some outside route around them through Jesus or through God or through Buddha or something, so they really successfully, sadly enough, stamped out a lot of the religions.

So New Year's Eve is their biggest holiday of the year, and they have a Santa Claus, they call him Father Frost, or "*Dyedmaroz* [phonetic]" they call him, and he comes a few weeks around New Year's Eve, and he's more like the St. Nicholas in Europe. He wears the pointy hat and the big robe, and he passes out presents and all that. They also have the Christmas tree tradition. They sort of stuck all the Christmas stuff and they sort of shoved it on New Year's and said, "Okay, that's our tradition now." And it stuck.

One other interesting holiday is International Women's Day. It's March 8th. That's the one day of

the year that the men are just extra, extra nice to the women. It's like our Mother's Day. You'll see them buy flowers. They have to buy flowers. They were just here, a lot of the Russians, and I went to the grocery store with them, and they bought like twelve bouquets of flowers, and they go, "I'm working with Nancy, so I have to get one for her. There was one girl that I just worked with for a day, and I'm not sure if she's coming back this afternoon, because I need a bouquet for her if she comes back." So anyway, they bought extra bouquets just in case So-and-so would show up, and they would go, "This is for you. We bought this just for you." I don't know if they do dishes. I've never been in a Russian apartment on Women's Day, but probably not.

The other thing that just kills me is that they have Red Army Day. I just got an e-mail from a friend, and said, "I want to wish you a happy Red Army Day." I'm like, "What are you talking about? I'm an American." But for them that's Father's Day. They don't have a Father's Day. So just about everybody, if you're male in Russia, has been in the Army at one point or another, so they sort of use that as their Men's Day, or their Father's Day. I'm like, "How can you wish me a happy Red Army Day? These are the people that want to destroy me, drop bombs on my head, and roll over Europe in tanks." Nonetheless, it was a very serious warm wish. "Happy Red Army Day." "Oh, thank you."

The most ridiculous holiday, and the Russians can't understand it either, is called Independence Day. [Laughter] This is the day that Boris Yeltsin and the head of Byelorussia and the head of the Ukraine Republics of the Soviet Union got together in secret and declared independence. From who? I don't know. [Laughter] They declared this from the Soviet Union. It makes more sense if you're in Byelorussia or if you're in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, but in Moscow it makes absolutely no sense. Moscow *is* the Soviet Union, is the capital of Russia, I mean, it always was the center. I mean, it's totally autocratic kind of rule. I mean, even the whole revolution thing, I mean, Boris Yeltsin, where is he from? He's from Moscow. It makes absolutely no sense. So I always tease Russians. I go, "So what's this? Can you explain this independence?" I sort of act stupid. "Can you explain this Independence Day for me?" They just sort of go, "Well, I don't know." Or a lot of them go, "Oh, it's a holiday today? What's the holiday?" All they know is they don't have to work that day, so they're really happy. They're like, "Oh, we love holidays." It just makes no sense on any intellectual level, this Independence Day, when you're in Moscow. Maybe in the republics it certainly does, but not when you're in Moscow. They were the oppressors. They were the central bureau of control that decided everything. They decided how many toilets would be in Vladivostock in the second apartment next to the train station. They decide everything.

Audience: We actually have to celebrate Labor Day on the wrong day. It should be May first.

Lutomski: Now I want to switch subjects a little bit and talk about working in Russia and traveling in Russia. The first thing I'd like to talk about is the Russian sort of workplace culture, and that is one of the biggest differences you'll see. When you go over there, you'll just be in awe the whole time, because there's just things that don't happen at NASA where you work, or any American firm, or at Exxon, or wherever it happens to be. The things that are just yelled out are just forbidden things. The three words that come to my mind are: drinking, animals, and women. These are things that you think about when you think about the Russian workplace.

First of all, animals. There's always stray dogs sitting around the outside of the buildings. Everything is controlled. There's fences around all buildings, even if it's a junkyard. No matter what it is, you always have some babushka sitting out, and you can only get in if you have a "*propusk* [phonetic]," a pass to get in. Even if it's a place nobody wants to go. No matter what it is, they always have these little turnstile booths where there's someone that verifies that you're who you are, say you are, and that you're allowed to get through. Even within the compound, you see all these stray dogs. How do they get in here? "Where's your *propusk*?" [Laughter] It's just amazing.

And then cats are everywhere. Stray cats in the buildings. Even in the NASA office, in the control center we've adopted one of the cats there. You'll go to sit down and you see this big furball. "What's that? Oh, it's a sleeping cat." There's just cats everywhere. One of the rumors is that the keep away the mice from all the wires. Well, it's sort of true, but even places where there's no wires, you see these stray cats living. So it's just sort of another cultural thing.

Then the women, it's so different there, the culture. I just met my friends last week that were in town from Russian, and something came up where one of the women wanted to go shopping, and he said, "No, you're not going shopping. We're going to go back to work." She said, "Oh, just for five minutes. Just for five minutes." He wasn't even a boss, not boss relationship, it was just a male-female relationship, and he leans over and says, "In Russia, our women are not emancipated yet." He was totally serious. You just can't believe it. Anytime there's people come in a room, you make tea for like the guests from the room next door, or when I come in to visit people, they're always making tea and serve you cookies, and I can't remember more than two times when a man ever made tea. It was always didn't matter the woman, didn't matter what level she was in the management chain, the woman would get up, and she would go clean the glasses out and make the tea and serve you tea, and get the cookies out. For the American side, it's really shocking. It's like, "Get off your butt. You're trying to do this."

Then the other thing is TV. They want to impress you with having a TV. If you're a high-level manager, they always have a TV in their office. I'll never forget, one guy invited me to his office. The first

thing he does is he runs over to the corner of the office, turns the TV on, blares the volume, and then gets back and has me sit down next to his desk, and he tells me about himself and all this kind of stuff. I was so distracted with this TV making all this noise, and then five minutes later he gets up, shuts the TV off, and says, "Okay, let's go." [Laughter] What's the point? It's a status thing. It's like a cellular phone. "I've got a TV in my office."

It's really strange, too, you'll be at work and you'll see the TV going on, and all of a sudden you'll see like some frontal nudity scene or something, and it's like "What's that?" Things that you're not used to seeing at work. People have gotten fired in my workplace for watching TV before, and then to see, not pornography, but just sort of frontal nudity on TV, or some naked guys in the banja[unclear] or something. It's like, "Gee, what's going on here?" So it's sort of shocking things, and it's always distracting when you're trying to work and there's some blaring TV in the corner. It's something that really bugged me personally.

Then the other funny thing is, I worked a lot in the control center when I was there. In NASA, the culture in the control center is when there's data on the screen and when you're in communications with the vehicle, you have to make sure you keep your eye on that data and really figure out what we're doing. Of course, we do very short-period intense-activity flights, but there I was, I'll never forget, I was in someone's office, and I think we were talking or having tea. It was very rare when the cosmonauts come over ground site. You usually had fifteen-minute ground site passes. This cosmonaut starts talking, and we just keep talking, and she just didn't even go look at the data. She didn't even listen to a word they were saying. She just carried on, because this is a high-context culture. They've got a guest in the room. We're not going to interrupt their conversation just because there's a com pass going on. It's ridiculous.

That's the kind of things you're just in total shock for you, like, "Oh, my God. Don't you want to get up and kick me out of your room, please? Go do your work."

"Oh, no, that's okay. We've got another one in ninety minutes." That's true, they do. They've got another one in ninety minutes. It's not the last chance to hear the crew. If it's very important, she'll hear about it.

Did I talk about drinking yet? Oh, drinking in the workplace is *incredible*. I mean, it's just so commonplace. Every department has their own set of shot glasses and tumblers and, I guess, the taller glasses, I forget what you'd call them, and rock glasses, and everything, and plates and forks and knives, because you never know when you're going to have an excuse to party. The funny thing is, if it's anybody's birthday, "Oh, it's Ted's birthday today! Yes, let's party!" What the nice tradition about Russia is that if it's Ted's birthday, Ted buys all the drinks and brings all the food, and he hosts his own party, which is

actually sort of nice, and they do it at their house. And again, this is another sexist thing. So when it's the men's birthday, of course, they don't really do all the preparation. Who does it for them?

Audience: The wives.

Lutomski: Right, the wives, girlfriends. Then when it's her birthday, who does all the work?

Audience: The wife or girlfriend.

Lutomski: Right. Exactly. So even when it's her husband's birthday, she still does all the work.

They also celebrate name days. "Oh, it's Tatania Day." It's January sometime, I forget. "Oh, let's celebrate! Let's get some champagne and celebrate." In Russia there's a lot of Tatanias, so that's almost like a national holiday. There's a joke in Russia that there's only five names for women and five names for men. If you go to Russia, you will meet three or four Elenas, five or six Natashas, two or three Tatanias, Svetlanas, and then after that it gets a little more rare. But you will meet those people. Remember those names. You will meet numbers of them. I once walked into a room with my interpreter Natasha, and I said, "Oh, Natasha, this is my interpreter Natasha. This is Natasha, and this is Natasha." There's three Natashas. [Laughter] I mean, all of them in the room had the same name. You'll see that over, and over, and over.

So the workplace is very different. You see when you go to stores, that people will just be sitting around. There will be a security guard and just sits around. There's just a lot of jobs there where you're required to do nothing but sit for eight hours or ten hours a day, and they do this without any question. Like me, I would go crazy. I'm an engineer, I have to keep moving. I have to talk and be working, I have to be occupied with something. Maybe it's a short attention span, I don't know. But they can sit and do absolutely nothing for hours and hours.

It's part of the Soviet culture that is sort of dying out and left over from that a lot of it, because you would get paid to do a job, and there was no connection between the job and your reward. The people that got ahead were the people that were politically savvy, and learn to back-stab their buddy, make him look bad, make themselves look good, and they would get promoted in the party. If you were high in the party, it was also associated with your salary at work and what your position was at work. Everything was from the party. Everything was there. Even today, most of the managers you work with, the high-level managers, most of them were in the party. They wouldn't have gotten there because they were just technically smart. They're obviously not going to promote dummies either, but they're politically savvy. They're very, in a lot of ways, sophisticated in how they deal with people and how they get what they want

from people, and that kind of stuff.

The next thing I want to talk about is something with a lot of misinformation, is safety over there. How many people think of Russia as a safe place, and how many people think of it as a dangerous place? Okay, who thinks that Russia and Moscow's a safe place? Anybody? One person. Who thinks it's dangerous, a very dangerous place? Most everybody thinks it's a dangerous place, because that's all you see in the media is, oh, the mafia hit, and this and that and another thing. What you hear in the media is they tell you these stories about So-and-so who was just killed today in this big gang shooting with machine guns and drove off in their Mercedes. We extrapolate in our minds, oh, well, that must be the way the whole society is. But, no, that's just the one guy got killed.

The thing I would like to say to you guys is, I grew up in a suburb of Detroit, [unclear]The Motor City, and I lived in Houston for about twelve years. Moscow is the safest city, by far the safest city I've ever lived in my life. I was over in Moscow. We lived in downtown Moscow right in the center of town with my wife and three children, and it was the safest city I've ever been in in my life. There's not common criminals there. There's not somebody that's going to steal your car, mug you with a gun or knife. The worst thing that can happen to you typically for a tourist is walking through an airport or bus station and gypsies come in and try to steal your purse, or maybe try to pickpocket, a tribe of twelve gypsy kids running after you and trying to stick their hands in your pocket or something. But there's not like this violent crime, there's not like somebody's going to break into the apartment and mug you or attack you or assault you in any way. It typically doesn't happen. There is crime there, petty crime, but compared to America, it's nonexistent, and murder there is almost nonexistent.

Now, in saying that let me qualify that. There is a lot of murder there, but that's all between mafia and the mafia. The favorite target of the mafia is always bank presidents, because there's always battles over the control of the bank and all that money in the bank, of course. This is human nature. So there's sort of a saying in Moscow, "He's deader than a bank president." [Laughter] And it's true. There's bank presidents that live in the bank, in little enclosures in the bank, and they never leave, twenty-four hours a day, they never leave the bank. They still have armed guards with bullet-proof vests all around the first floor, second floor, all the way up around, because it's that dangerous.

If you're going over as a NASA engineer, and you've got a VISA in your pocket, you're always thinking, "Oh, somebody's going to steal my VISA card." Well, you don't have to worry about that in Moscow; there's no place they can use it. I had to totally change my spending habits in a healthy way. I had to take cash. I'd never walk out of the house with less than $200 cash, because you can't use a VISA card. If you see something you need, and, of course, there's a lot of shortages still for like Western-type

goods that you'd be interested in over there. If you see something, you go, "Oh, I've been looking for that waffle iron for three months." You've got to have $50 in your pocket, or sometimes $100, to go buy that, because you might not see it again. If you go home, or go to the bank and come back the next day, it may be gone. That's one lesson I learned is when you see something and you like it, just buy it. It's not like, "Oh, I'm going to check Home Depot and Builder's Square, and see the best price, and the selection."

Audience: Get the right color.

Lutomski: "Get the right color," or "The lowfat strawberry yogurt with amaretto. I like the one with the capuccino flavor better." I mean, it's like, "Yogurt! Oh, yes!" You don't care about all these little details of what flavor and color and what make it is. You just buy it. So your spending habits really change.

The funny thing, or the sad thing, I guess, about Russia, the biggest thing I worried about and my wife worried about and my Russian friends worried about is not the criminals, the police, because they are corrupt. My wife would drive the kids to school, and she got stopped almost every day by the traffic police. They're out in numbers. They have police that only do traffic, and she gets stopped almost every day and gets harassed by the police, and she's like, "[unclear], I don't speak Russian." So he brings over another guy, and they have two guys yell at her, and one day it was just to get out of the car and clean her license plate off. That's a big thing in Russia. You have to keep a clean car and you need the license plates clean so you can read the numbers, otherwise you can get fined. They are just always harassing people.

I took a train ride to Volgagrad [phonetic], I took a Russian friend with me, and he says, "I don't know, Mike, this could be trouble."

I go, "What do you mean? You don't think it's safe there? You think we'll get mugged or something?"

He goes, "No, no. It's the police." This is my Russian friend telling me this. "Yes, they're always checking for documents, and you're going to be a foreigner, and I'm going to be traveling with you, and they're going to harass us."

And it's true. It's the biggest thing you have to worry about is the police, because they're the ones with the guns. [Laughter] It's sad to say, but you realize that Russia is not a country of laws, it's not a country that's predictable, that you can say, "Oh, good, the police are here." It's more like, "Oh, no, the police are here."

They'll say, "*Documente, pozalsta*, [phonetic]," meaning, "Give me your documents."

You're not allowed to--still, it's just like the Soviet Union, nothing's changed. You can't live in this apartment unless your passport is stamped with special permits that says you can live in this apartment. If

you want to move to another apartment, there's no houses in Moscow, but if you were to want to move way out of the city into a house, you have to have permission, get all the right papers, and all the right registrations, and "Oh, you're not supposed to be in Moscow, you live in St. Petersburg," or Katerinaburg [phonetic]. "You get back on the train. What are you doing in Moscow?" Blah, blah, blah. The police are always harassing you.

The police are very racist, too. If people of darker color--a Colombian friend I worked with a lot over there, he came over and he was always getting stopped. Because of his dark hair and brown skin, he looks like a Chechan a little bit, so they're always stopping him, "*Documente, pozalsta*," and harassing him. I had other friends that they showed them their passports, they said, "Oh, these passports aren't good," so they were going to take them down to the station.

So then the police took them around the corner and said, "Twenty bucks. Twenty bucks."

My friends ended up paying, and they came back the next day and said, "This is what happened. What should we have done? Should we have called the embassy?"

I said, "You did the right thing."

It's not a place where it matters if you're right or wrong. "That's not fair." Some American would say, "That's not fair." It doesn't matter what's fair. You're out and you want to go to dinner, or you want to go dancing, or whatever you want to do. Do you want to go sit in the police station for four hours in a dirty cell with some drunk guys, and call the embassy and have them bail you out and be right? Or do you just want to pay twenty bucks and go have a good time. So my advice is just pay these people off if you have to--it's unfortunate that you have to--and go enjoy yourself over there. You don't have to worry about being mugged or attacked. You'll stick out as an American, because you'll be like this, and this, you know, smiling everywhere. You can't avoid it. Plus, your shoes. They can tell by the shoes you wear and the way your teeth are white and you have them all in there. I mean, they can spot you a million miles away, so there's no way you can sort of blend in at all.

But people are very polite, and they actually come up and they want to practice their English on you. Everybody you know in Moscow--I don't think it's true in the outlying areas--has a brother-in-law or a cousin or a high school friend or somebody that lives in America, or had lived or studied in America. So they always want to talk to you. "Oh, I have a friend in Chicago. Have you been to Chicago?" "I have a friend in New York."

Anyways, I would suggest not worrying about your personal safety. Do carry your documents or a Xerox of your passport and your visa. Your visa is very important. Don't lose any of these documents. Russia's the only country I know in the world where you have to have a visa to get out of the country. You

have to have an exit visa. If you lose your visa, then you have to buy an exit visa for $200. I mean, it's just insane, like who wants to escape? "You all foreigners must stay here." I mean, I don't get it. You know the philosophy. It's just like the Soviet Union. I have a friend who wanted to come visit me while my family was in France, and they wouldn't let him. The company he works for keeps his international passport, because he usually travels on official business, and they wouldn't give it to him to travel out of the country. I mean, it's just insane. It's still the Soviet Union there.

One thing you do a lot in Moscow, it's just part of the culture, you take taxis. You don't take yellow taxis, you just get on the street and you go like this. You don't use the thumb there, you just put your hand out like this, and any Joe Schmoe is a potential taxi, and you just get in the car and just say where you want to go. If it's too far, he says, "No, I don't want to take you there." Sometimes you don't even negotiate a price. I'd say, "How much?" and he says, "Oh, as much as you want to pay me." I drove there and I had a car, and I even picked up people. After a while I stopped, because they would sit in my car, and they'd say, "Take me to Novaslovoska [phonetic]."

I go, "Where's that?"

"Oh, don't worry, I'll show you."

So you get in the car and you drive them across the whole city in a half an hour. You just wanted to go six blocks, and you've gone 60 kilometers, and then you have to still get back. So I stopped doing that unless I knew exactly where they were going or something. I mean, it's totally safe, too. Now, I wouldn't recommend you people take taxis while you're there, because you don't speak Russian, and if they go left when they should have gone right, you won't know. So I'm not suggesting you use this type of taxi, but it's just to prove my point more that it's a safe place. My wife took taxis alone, she took them with the kids. How horrible. Can you imagine in America letting your wife hitchhike with the kids? I mean, that's just impossible. You couldn't fathom that in a city like Houston. But in Moscow you can do that. That's a safe place. And other NASA families did the same thing when they were there. It's just the culture there.

Oh, yes. I read a horrible story before I left. There was an American, they were doing a sweep of the streets, the police were, and getting everyone's documents. He was a black American, or Afro-American, and they picked him up, of course, because he was black, and they took him back to his apartment, and they found a little bag of marijuana in his apartment. He says, "I don't know if it was my bag of marijuana they found or they dropped their own." But anyways, they arrested him and put him in jail, and he couldn't get out of jail. He spent fourteen months in jail. I guess the message there is, unless you're a diplomat, the American Embassy tried to get this guy our for fourteen months, but they couldn't. They can just put you in jail. They tried to bring charges against him, they tried to get other people to

testify against him that he was a drug dealer, and finally one other foreign lady did, and then she ended up backing out and reversing her charges. So anyway, this guy spent fourteen months in three different Russian prisons before he finally got out. So again, the police are the ones to be scared of. It's not a country of laws. They have a great Constitution, says equal rights for everyone, and civil rights and all that stuff, but there's no laws to back them up. The *duma* [phonetic] is controlled by the hardliners and the Communists, and so there's no laws to back it up. So the Constitution just sits on the shelf and is a pretty document, but until you pass laws that really enforce it and make it a living document, it might as well not even exist. So it's sort of scary.

Okay, I think I'm probably going too long here, but let's talk about negotiating with Russians real quick. In America, our lives, relatively speaking, are so easy. We go to the store, and they have everything we want, and our biggest problem in America is that we can't find the right wallpaper to go with the carpeting we bought. Compared to Russians, life here is a lot easier. Like I said, in Russia, every day's a struggle trying to feed your family and make a living, make enough money to live. That's why when you negotiate with Russians, for the Russians it's sort of like just taking candy from a baby. Every day just to get through their day, they've got to argue and yell at somebody, and be tough and be strong, and people be yelling at them, and telling them what to do. So when they see this American, this smiley kid, sitting on the other side of the table, like a young guy like me, sitting across from a fifty-, sixty-year-old guy who's your counterpart, it's just like--it's sort of a joke. It's taking candy from a baby, because these are people who've been around, and every day is a struggle for them.

That's why I think there's just a natural inherent disadvantage we have when we try to negotiate with Russians. You see it happens over and over as all the teams come to Russia, when I was living there, from Houston, and it got to be almost humiliating to see all the teams come, and there are things they want to get accomplished, get rejected, and they sort of send them home. The Russians, they always end up getting something that they want from you when they negotiate. A lot of times it's money, obviously. So they stall and stall and be stubborn, and say, "No, no. We need money, money." So finally NASA says, "Okay, I'm tired of this. Okay, we'll give them money." Or a lot of times they just try to get other promises from you that they wanted.

I think sometimes they just get satisfaction just watching you grovel for months at a time. You go to three meetings, after you've had twenty telecons, and the guy's still saying, "No, no, no," because he really doesn't want to do it, and then you tell your boss of the Russian working group or something, "Oh, this guy, Vladimir, he doesn't want to speak English on the Space Station," or something. So the Russians still say no. Then they bring it up to the administrator's level or something, and then up to the State

Department, and this goes up and up, and finally, [unclear] "Oh, okay. We can do that." [Laughter] Sometimes I think they just enjoy us watching to see us grovel and beg.

We're no match for the Russians. The Russians can do something Americans cannot do, and that is wait. They can wait and wait and wait and wait some more. Americans are just going crazy. We just can't do that. "I can't wait anymore. I have to get this question solved, this answer issued. I have to give them my agenda items." That's the biggest advantage: they're able to wait. They're used to waiting in lines before. I mean, everything in Russia you just have to learn to wait. No matter what you're doing, you just wait and you wait. It's just part of it. They're good at waiting, and they can do it, and we cannot. We're so impatient, we have to get all our questions answered. So that's something to keep in mind, too, is that you're at a natural disadvantage going in. You don't have much of a chance, but maybe if you understand some more of the rules, you'll be able to at least put in perspective.

Americans, when we negotiate, our nature, we like to be liked, we like to be accepted, we like to agree. "Does everyone agree? Okay, good. I feel good." I saw this a lot in the French culture from my wife; they like to dispute. They like to have healthy disputes--for them healthy, for us it can be offensive and very upsetting. They like to sit around and talk about something. It's very acceptable for them to disagree, and to argue and fight, but then they get up from the table, and they still hold hands and go drink, or maybe they were drinking during the argument, and they're still friends after. They don't take it personally, where Americans, if you disagree too much, you start taking it personal. Like, "Oh, that jerk, he's a real something-or-other." We don't agree. You feel better when, oh, you agree. "Oh, you like Bill Clinton, I like Bill Clinton. Oh, let's be friends." So that's another thing that you'll see a lot.

Now, I'll give away one of the secrets to work with Russians. This is normally a $200 value that I tell on the info-mercial at night, if you've seen them. One of the biggest secrets you can do to warm up to Russians, to sort of break the ice to get things rolling, is just before you go--has anybody here ever told a joke in their whole life? Told a joke? Everybody's told a joke, right? Everybody can do it, right? Even if you're a bad joke-teller, you can do it. Everybody's told at least a few jokes in their life. Go over there and memorize a couple of jokes. Like I can't memorize jokes. Make notes on a piece of paper, whatever you have to do. Just have some jokes up your sleeve, because there will be ten, twenty times, opportunities for you to use this joke. You don't have to worry about opportunities, and you just start telling a joke. It can be a long joke, the longer, more involved, the better. The interpreter, they're usually Russian, so they don't have any trouble. They understand that the jokes are just something, part of the job.

This will just warm them up. They'll realize, okay, so this guy's no so weird, and he does everything wrong, but he's sort of one of us. He understands. It really warms up. Or just tell stories. Tell

some twenty-minute story about taking your kid to school one day, whatever it takes. That will really break the ice, and they'll realize that, "Okay, this guy's weird, but he's not that weird." It's perfectly harmless. You're not like deceiving them or anything, you're just telling a joke. Even if that's not your thing, that would really help.

Something else to keep in mind when you're working with Russians is the resources they have. They're very, very understaffed, and, of course, underfunded, as probably most of us know. But my estimate is there's usually like twelve or sometimes twenty Americans for every one Russian. So before I moved there I would send faxes, I'd do telecons with Russians. I was always so angry and frustrated. "Why didn't they answer my faxes? Why did they always show up for the telecon unprepared? Why can't they give me this data?" And you realize a lot of times it may be they don't want to because they disagree with where you're trying to take them, or a lot of times it will be like, "These Americans don't know anything about space stations. We've already spent thirty years building seven space stations. Here we're building our eighth space station. What do these people know that can help me?"

But a lot of it is just pure resources. I was working in the Mission Control Center there, and the same guy would do the Phase One telecon with the Shuttle program, then do a Phase Two telecon with the Space Station Program, and then he would be a flight controller and have to fly, whatever, do real-time operations in the thing, and then a TIM would come over, a Technical Interchange Meeting, and he would have to sit down for four hours a day with the Americans that were in town, or the Chinese, or whoever's in town. I mean, they are just understaffed. It's just amazing. So I had a better appreciation for it's not always because they don't want to do it, or they're not cooperative, or they don't agree with the philosophy. A lot of times they're just totally understaffed.

How many of you here are studying Russian? Anybody studying Russian? Yes, a lot of you. I recommend you take Russian, but it was funny, because I had a lot of discouragement when I was taking Russian, because it's very hard. We had instructors from the Defense Language Institute for Monterrey, and one day the director comes in from California and he comes in the room and starts talking about it, and he goes, "I know what you guys are going through. When you learn Russian, it has this big learning curve in the beginning, where before you can really start learning to say, 'Hello, my name is Mike,' or 'I have a car,' you have to learn all this grammar first up front, and then start learning the normal stuff. Where most languages you can just sort of learn to speak, and then you can learn the grammar later on." But he's like, "If I had to do it all over again, I don't think I'd do it again." [Laughter] I'm like, "Oh, thanks, come by and visit some more often."

Verbs of motion are very difficult, all these prefixes that you have to learn, and then after the

prefixed verb you have to put the special words that go after it, declensions and all this stuff. In the embassy, one of my interpreters was there and I asked her some questions. She goes, "Would you just forget it." She said, "You're never going to learn Russian. Just don't even try, it's just too complicated. Just forget it." I'm like, "Oh, thanks for the encouragement." [Laughter]

So anyways, just to give you a realistic expectation, if you know other foreign languages, you understand that it's very difficult to speak a foreign language. It takes a long time to learn. So just have realistic expectations. Learn some Russian, learn how to say, "I want a beer," or "Give me a kiss," or something, something useful you can use at work there, you know. [Laughter] You see this at work, alcohol, men just grabbing women, kissing them, "Oh, it's your birthday," or, "It's my birthday, I want to kiss you," whatever the case. But just learn a couple of useful phrases like that, and that will go a long way.

I was just thinking, the other day I went to lunch with some of the Russians that were here in town last week, and it just sort of hit me all of a sudden, we were driving in their car, and we're all speaking Russian, it sort of just hit me how truly different these people are culturally in their ideas and their lifestyle. I was just thinking, gosh, this is really strange bedfellows. Here we are sort of forced together by international politics of building a space station together, and it's sort of remarkable when you think about it, all the people at NASA that sometimes have never been out of Texas, the first place they go is to Moscow. They get exposed to all this stuff all at once. It's not like going to Europe where you feel a little more comfortable, I mean, you're going to one of the more vastly different cultures from American cultures in the world. I guess it would be more if you went to maybe some Asian countries or Muslim countries or somewhere. It's really remarkable. Here we are, we've been working together for five or six years. I mean, sometimes it sort of hits me, like, wow, this is incredible.

Some of the things that happened when I was in Moscow, I guess of significant events, probably most significant was the presidential election, where Yeltsin won reelection, and that was very interesting to see it all, and you could just see how all the international media was just, "Yeltsin, Yeltsin, Yeltsin." I mean, all the Western countries, they weren't saying it outright, but it was all like, "Yeltsin, Yeltsin, Yeltsin." You saw that Yeltsin had all the money, he controlled all the media, and the strategy to win the presidential election in Russia is you win Moscow and St. Petersburg, where I think 40 percent or something of the population lives in those two areas. They are also more liberal and more businesslike, so those are easier to win, too. Then just sort of forget about everybody else. Zugonov, the popular Communist party leader , won a signivicant part of the vote. If you were to do the maps like they do in America, if they had Electoral College, the whole country would have been in red with a couple of blues

right around Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Part of the reason this Communist guy but didn't have a chance is because he just didn't have the money. Yeltsin just totally controlled the newspapers and mostly television, and he'd just run these television ads over and over and over. A lot of it, too, was just sort of the lesser of two evils. I mean, Yeltsin, they really talk bad about him. They just think of him as this poor, old, pathetic drunkard, and he's blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and they just really talk negative about him.

Then I ask, "Who did you vote for?"

"Oh, Yeltsin."

"Well, why did you do that if you hate him so much?"

Well, they're scared. They had the Communists before, and they were scared that they might have to go back, and a lot of them might have something to lose. So anyways, it was the kind of thing of they were just more scared of the Communists coming back than they were of Yeltsin and the continued corruption and criminals and things that they have today.

Then they also had the big thing of the 850th birthday of Moscow, which is this totally contrived thing. For the two years building up to it they had posters all over Moscow, 850, 850, and then the festival finally comes, and they invite all these international guests, and they had Pavarotti singing at the opening ceremonies and the closing ceremonies, and all these big international stars, but it was the most poorly planned event I've ever seen in my life. People just flooded into the center of the city. I took my two kids with me, and they had sort of a kid part of town, and other kind of concerts, but it was just too crowded. Moscow's controlled, only for the VIPs, and, in the old days, the party members. So you couldn't go there, "Oh, that's closed," "Red Square's closed, for ticket only, invitation only," "This place is closed." So everybody's cruising down the street, and then it stops because there's a gate there and it's closed. So you sit there like this, and you finally get up to the gate, "Oh, yes, I guess we can't go anywhere," so then you go back. My daughter was like, "I want something to drink, Daddy." I go, "Okay, let's go get something to drink." There's no places that sell any drinks. We finally find a place and there's a line like of thirty-five people. I go, "This isn't going to work." So we just finally walked out of the city until we finally found a place you could just sit down quietly and buy a Coke, so we did that. Then we ended up going home, and going to a different park and walking around in a quiet place. But there's no souvenirs to buy. In America, they would have had the souvenirs and the McDonald's toys to match, but it was just really just a PR thing by the mayor there. It was really crazy.

But one of the good things, even though it was all superficial, and they did paint all the outside of the buildings, and repaved the streets, so it got a facelift. The roof still leaked and there wasn't hot water in

the buildings that didn't have it before. They didn't fix any of the real functional things, but the outside looked nice. They patched up the holes and painted it. So it had some positive things, it's still positive, because it does give people more pride in the city and that kind of stuff.

Real briefly I talk about where Russia is going, and that's, of course, the common thing you hear about when you read articles about Russia. Where will Russia be? And a lot of people say, "In ten years we'll be just like America." It's like, no way, no chance. The biggest reason, I didn't realize this until I traveled to Estonia and Poland, but the biggest reason is they can't agree. They don't have a common vision of "We want to be like this." Poland has a Western mentality, and the second they had their independence, foreign investors rushed in there and they modernized and they all sort of agreed. They had the advantage of saying, "Oh, we've kicked those Russians out. We've kicked the Communists out. Now we're in charge and we can rebuild." They sort of had a common dream and a purpose.

Same with Estonia. They passed laws for equal rights forownership for foreigners, and all this kind of simple things like that, where in Russia you still can't own property if you're a foreigner, and to do business you have to have a Russian partner who owns 51 percent, you own 49 percent. Undoubtedly, within so many years after you get the business built up and train all the Russians how to do it, inevitable they will kick you out of the country. One day the mafia comes at your door and says, "Hello. Don't go to work today. This is my business, not yours, and if you want to live, don't show your face here again." So he as long as he takes his wife and kids to the airport and runs home. And you hear this story over and over and over.

At the same time, Boris Yeltsin's at the G-8 Summit here in Denver, Colorado, and he goes around the country saying "Invest in Russia. Come invest in Russia." You're like, "How can this be going on?" He's inviting more capital into the country and more foreigners, but it's a very dangerous place to do business if you're a big businessman. People like us, we're nobodies, we don't have any money. Even if you have your credit card and it's got a $5,000 limit on it, what good are you to the serious dealmakers and the serious criminals there? If you want to go open a bottling factory for Coca-Cola, or sell diapers or Pampers, now, that's money. Then you've got to deal with all these criminal people. That's why it's mostly a safe thing there.

The people there have just a natural distrust of government and institutions and politicians, and, frankly, they should. After the Communists and things that happened under there, some of the darker periods of their history, see, that part is becoming apathetic a lot. Now there's just like apathy setting in. "I don't care. Whatever they do, and they never have my interests in mind." So it doesn't matter if it's the czar, or if it's Lenin, or whoever it is, it's all just BS, so they sort of just say, "Whatever." A lot of them

don't vote, and they just sort of say, "It's not my problem." They don't pay taxes. I said, "Somebody's got to pay to built the roads and pay the Army. What if China invades?" "Oh, it's not my thing. It's not my problem." They really have a disconnect, like, oh, somebody else, they're supposed to pay taxes. Somebody else, they're supposed to save us. You think it's bad in America, but the Russians, apathy is even stronger there.

I'll close now. I think I've gone on a little longer than I planned. But one thing I learned, not only being married to a foreigner, but living over there, it's a really interesting and a really good way to get to know who you are, know what Americans are and really get to know your own country, because you can't really understand it until you see it through the eyes of the other people. Before, I used to think, "Well, this is better in that country, this is better over there," but after finally learning more and more, you sort of come full circle and you realize, wow, these are the really the advantages of America, and culture, just the culture we have. We're open-minded, we accept people, we accept foreigners. It's a country of laws, things that you just take for granted that you don't really understand until you live abroad. It doesn't matter. You go through these stages when you adapt to other cultures. Like if you saw me in Moscow, you would see me wearing a fur hat and wearing a leather jacket, walking down the street, but it doesn't matter. Like the great line in the movie, the "Repo Man," thateuy says, "No matter where you go, there you are." That's sort of what I was just saying, in summary, it's like, "No matter where you go, there you are." It doesn't matter if I walk around in Russia with a fur hat or I go to Paris and ask for a baguette and fromage or something. It doesn't matter how well you speak other languages and understand cultures, you're still who you are, and no matter where you go, there you are. It's sort of a discovery, self-discovery, if you will. An interesting journey.

This is a footnote. Two really, really good books to read are *Lenin's Tomb: The Days of the Soviet Empire*, by David Remnick [phonetic]. He was the *Washington Post* reporter there from '88 to '91, some real key periods there. And he writes not only entertaining, but it's informative. He had Russian roots, and he spoke the language fluently. He sees a lot of similar experiences you'll read in his book that I've experienced. The big thing about his book is, he's more of a historian, he was actually a reporter, a foreign reporter, for such an important newspaper. He had access to these really important people, So-and-so's ex-wife, or Stalin's niece, or So-and-so, and he would go interview all of these people, and the people at the highest levels that influence everyone, and he really ties the book together well. Anyways, that ended up winning a Pulitzer Prize.

Another one describes sort of today's Russia and why they're going to continue to struggle, it's called *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, by Steven Handleman [phonetic], and that is another

reporter who worked for the *Toronto Star*, who was there from '87 to '92, and he just sort of describes some of the things going on. Of course, his book is more sensationalized, because addresses themafia, and they talk about the casinos and all of this. So you can't extrapolate that into all of Russian culture and life, but it does explain some of the things that are going on at the top and why the guy goes over to sell Nabisco Crackers can't make any money, even though he's selling $6 billion worth of stuff, the money's disappearing, or something like that.

Thank you very much, and thank you for inviting me. [Audience applause]

Audience: Wasn't that the law that you have to deal in ruble currency?

Lutomski: Yes, and it wasn't enforced, but now it's finally enforced.

Audience: But, of course, black markets or in the flea markets, they'll take dollars.

Lutomski: Yes, of course, they still will, but it's less and less now. I actually used only rubles when I was there.

Audience: That was always the biggest thing, was the hard currency, by that meaning either Deutsche marks, dollars, something non-Russian ruble.

Lutomski: Yes. You see every two feet in Russia there's a money exchange. Why are there all these money exchangers? Because every Russian has dollars, U.S. dollars, at home. So when they need to spend their money, they need to buy a television set, my friends who make $200 a month, just start going [sound effects], and hundred-dollar bills, I've never seen that much money in my life, they're just going, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, five hundred, six, seven, eight, and then they take it and they cash it in, and they give it to the guy at the appliance store to buy the new Sony Trinitron. They've been saving this money for a year, probably, and they just flash this money out. "Where'd you get all that money?" Because we're like this credit card, you know, or bill me, or something. Money is really a whole different--

Audience: Do they have checking accounts like we do?

Lutomski: No, they're starting. VISAs [credit cards] are starting to catch on.

Audience: It's a cash-and-carry society, then.

Lutomski: Yes, oh, very much so. VISAs are starting to catch on, but it's more like Europe where the VISAs are pretty much just like debit cards, where there's really not credit, it's more like you take it out of your card, or you have to pay the bill every month. But even one of the shirts you can guy as a souvenir has all like monuments of Moscow, and it has VISA, under it says "No good here." [Laughter] It's true. There's cash machines popping up. In the two years I lived there, it went from like one cash machine in the whole city and now there's probably a couple hundred, but still it's just for foreigners and a few Russians. It's convenient for me, but I don't know how they're making money, because the average Russian doesn't have VISAs and debit cards and ATM cards.

Audience: What about the telephones and transportation infrastructure?

Lutomski: The transportation infrastructure--I've been to London and Paris and other places like metropolitan cities where I thought was very impressive mass transit. Moscow was even better. Moscow has electric trains every direction that rivals any Western country. They have buses that go everywhere, electric buses, and then just regular buses, diesel that go out further into the country, and they have, of course, the metro system. By far the most impressive and reliable and predictable mass transit system I've ever seen, which is amazing.

The Metro comes every two minutes. The Metro leaves the station and another one will be there in two minutes. In Paris, sometimes you'll wait for twenty minutes if you're on the RER or something, or going to the far-off station where they branch off or something. It's a very, very good infrastructure for transportation. What was your other question?

Audience: Telephones.

Lutomski: Telephones are just starting. That's a huge business. All the banks are in battle with each other to buy the government telephone companies. The French made a big investment there. You know that the cards--well, I guess they're coming into America, too. You buy the card at the grocery store, and you put the thing, and those are all over Moscow now, and they just put them in in the last six months. So those are starting to catch on. Because their old system was these taxiphones, they call them, with these little plastic tokens that you buy at the Metro stop, and you dial, and if the person answered, you can hear them, but they couldn't hear you until you dropped a coin in. But the Russians found out if you take those little tabs off the top of coke cans, and break them off, you can stick them in there and they work. So the Russians are like, "We have to do something." So they actually upgraded.

Of course, this is all foreign money coming in, and they want to make money. There's a lot of

foreign companies making money there. But it's more like if you do things on large scales for billions of dollars, like if you sell Pampers or Coke or Snickers, you can make a lot of money in Russia that way. There are a lot of foreigners there making lots of money. But I mean, if it's just you want to set up a restaurant or dry cleaner, forget it. You'll do it and then they'll steal your business and kick you out of the country.

For example California Cleaners, a young American that went there and started the business, and after five years they just barely let him get out of the country. He had $300 left in his pocket, and he took a plane to Finland and barely got out with his life. Engineering, no problem. Business, depends what scale you're at and how much interfacing and how much your personal safety will be, but it's a whole other world.

Audience: How about the status of engineers?

Lutomski: Well, they used to be the heros, those space engineers. Your co-workers will tell you this. They were way on top there, because everywhere you go there's space monuments. It's really strange for us, because space is still sort of lot, you've got Smithsonian, you have space enthusiasts, but in generally you don't walk around in Tennessee and see space monuments. There every little town has a little Yuri Gagarin Square and statues of Yuri and little mosaics on the wall of some space futuristic thing. It really was their pride, and the engineers were very high in the society. Now our friends are complaining to me, and they'll complain to you, "Oh, we used to be important, now we don't make any money. Nobody knows what we do. Nobody knows even when we launch humans into space." I go, "Oh, now you know how it feels." [Laughter]

Audience: "What's your point?"

Lutomski: How many of you guys have relatives that ask you, "Oh, does the Shuttle go to the moon?" Or, "Does the Shuttle launch in Florida or Houston?" You're just like, "Hello!" So it's like that now in Russia. People want to grow up to be businessmen. They don't want to be professors or engineers. They want to be rich and successful and drive around in Mercedes, and have a car phone and threaten their neighbors. That's success now. Of course, that sort of exaggeration's not 100 percent true, but, in general, engineers make $200 and college professors make $100. I mean, who wants to go be a college professor?

Fifty years from now, I'm scared personally, what will happen if you don't have this highly educated society. For Communists, one of the things they did do successfully was educate their population--overeducated. Most people there are way overqualified for the economy there, of course, and half of the

aerospace engineers are driving cabs and selling fruit. They left. And the ones that are there have been sort of stable. Now, in the last two years, you finally see hiring of young people out of college for the first time. So there's some hope there, but, in general, just like in America, we could never go back to Apollo. That was sort of artificial, and they can never go back to their space program, which was the [unclear], all these expenditures that were totally unrealistic, from a capitalistic economic-

Audience: I have a question and a story actually, the story first, because it sort of builds out what you were saying. When I was over there, we were doing some negotiating with some colleagues, and there was this man who would drive. He was the driver for this scientist, and he would sit in the car all day long just waiting for the meeting to get over, and the meeting would get over, and we would see him every day. He was always right on time. We got to talking with them. We asked him, does he like driving, whatever. We found out that he drives to make money, and, in fact, he's a respected surgeon, and he does surgery sort of when he needs to, but there's no money in it, so he drives.

Lutomski: That's true. One of the doormen you'll see at the Penta [phonetic], if you go and stay in the Penta where most NASA-related people stay, one of the doormen there is an old college professor, and he's been working at the Penta for ten years, because he can do that.

Our drivers that drove the NASA vans made somewhere around $1,200 a month, and my co-worker's making $220 a month. It's just incredible. There's two kind of philosophies there. There's do what you love, and that's more important. One of the drivers I talked to said, "Well, these people, my fellow countrymen, are idiots. They can get better jobs if they want. They just have to do it." Of course, he was young and didn't have the pride of knowing what it was like to put Yuri Gagarin in space, and didn't want to leave his job. So it's easy for him to talk like that. There's different philosophies there of what Russia needs to do. So this guy says, "Oh, just go for the money." The people we worked with are usually there because they love what they're doing, or they're too old to change, or whatever.

Audience: What about, for example, drinking? It's a big part of their culture.

Lutomski: Very much.

Audience: Suppose you're working with them, and that's not something that you're interested in. Is it offensive to not do shots with them?

Lutomski: Yes, it is to them. They just think you're just some wimpy American. But it's not a serious problem. The only excuse they'll accept is that you have a medical condition and your doctor doesn't allow

you to drink. So just use that one.

Audience: But don't let them see you take a beer, though.

Lutomski: [Laughter] Yes, or women, you can say, "I'm pregnant. I'm pregnant." They'll say, "Oh, well, beer is good for pregnant women."

The funny thing about Russians, it doesn't matter if I tell, "Oh, my stomach hurts."

"Oh, just have some vodka, it'll kill everything in there."

One time I said, "I've got an earache."

"Oh, throw some vodka in your ear."

Then it was like, "Oh, my foot hurts."

"Oh, drink some vodka and you'll forget about it." Whatever the ailment is, vodka.

My wife had the birth of our third child in France, and she was a little bit anemic after the delivery, and they bring her a big bottle of bordeaux, red wine. "Drink this, it's good for your blood." [Laughter] She was in the hospital, but in Finland, in the birthing room--not in the birthing room, but in the cafeteria there after the mothers give birth, they have pitchers of beer out all over the tables, because it's good for production of milk. So it depends what culture. So if you're in Finland, beer is the cure-all; in Russia, vodka is the cure-all; in France, red wine is the cure-all.

Audience: [unclear] kiosks everywhere so you can buy the beer or [unclear], or whatever. The cheapest vodka that I could find was White Eagle Vodka, and it's made in Minnesota.

Lutomski: [Laughter] It's true. It's true. How can you pay for that transportation cost, the import taxes? And how can it be the cheapest vodka? I noticed that, too. You see those bottles everywhere.

There's just things you can't explain over there, just really bizarre things, especially like the commissary in the Embassy, they were importing some of these goods from America, something that you can just get in Russia yourselves. I need American apples from Washington or something, they take them all across the ocean. Is that really necessary? [Laughter] Especially American vodka, that's just crazy.

[End of interview]