



Lost at the airport

Egbert is travelling to Moscow on business but no-one is there to pick him up as arranged. So, struggling with two languages, English and Russian, he has to find his way around the airport.

Egbert, der Ingenieur, ist beruflich viel unterwegs. Immer wieder schlittert er dabei in Situationen, die uns nur allzu bekannt vorkommen. Gerüstet mit den Vokabeln und Redewendungen dieser Rubrik werden Sie diese Situationen das nächste Mal mit Bravour meistern.

Recently, Egbert had to travel to Moscow on a business trip. A company driver would meet him at the airport and take him to his hotel. Going through passport control, completing the customs declaration and collecting his luggage took much longer than expected but at last he was pushing his trolley through the glass doors into the arrivals hall. The sea of faces was rather *disconcerting* as well as the number of placards with names and company logos on them. Egbert looked around for his name and the familiar red and green logo of the company he was visiting. Twenty minutes later there was still no sign of his name being waved in the air and Egbert's heart began to sink. Perhaps he was in the

wrong place, perhaps there was a central meeting place, although the email he received said quite clearly the arrivals hall. Time to take matters into his own hands. He went up to a young woman waiting to meet someone and asked politely, "Excuse me, could you tell me where the information desk is, please?". She looked at him *blankly* for a moment but then gesticulated with her hand while *mumbling* something in English which Egbert *didn't quite catch*. Not wanting to *push his luck*, he wandered off with his trolley in the general direction indicated and finally found the information desk. There were three people in front of him so it gave him time to think about what he was going to say. The

conversation running through his head went something like this:

- E. I wonder if you could help me. I was expecting to be met but there seems to be nobody here. Is it possible to put a message over the *tannoy system*.
 R. Certainly sir, if you could write your name here for me then I will put a call out over the *PA system* for you.
 E. Spasibo.

Egbert was pleased with the lovely smile his word of Russian produced and walked away hopeful that the person meeting him would now come to collect him at the information desk. Suddenly, he heard his name amongst a babble of Russian words. Feeling more encouraged he sat down nearby and waited. Going through his head was what would he do if no one came. The obvious thing would be to get a taxi to his hotel. He took from his *briefcase* the folder containing the information his secretary had given him. He was booked into the Sheraton Palace hotel, which, according to the information taken from the internet, was 35 kilometers from the airport in the centre of Moscow. The journey shouldn't take too long and with luck he might be able to have a walk before dinner. Wondering how much the taxi might cost, a picture came into Egbert's head; he could quite clearly visualize his US dollars lying on his office desk at home. He reached for his wallet and, sure enough, there were only Euros there, hopefully enough to get enough rubles for the taxi but first he would have to change some money.

Egbert looked over his shoulder expecting to see Murphy standing there, he always seemed to be around just when he wasn't needed. Egbert *caught the eye* of the woman behind the information desk who *shrugged her shoulders* to express no one had turned up for him. So, action was called for. First stop, a bank.

- E. Hallo, I would like to change some Euros into rubles please. Is it possible to use my German EC card?
 R. You can use the card in an *ATM* but here I can only change cash or travellers cheques.
 E. Fine, then I'll just change some Euros.
 R. How much would you like to change?
 The exchange rate today is 33.9 rubles to the Euro.
 E. Then could you change €100 into rubles please?
 R. How would you like the money sir?

- E. Could you give me a mixture of denominations please and also some coins if possible?
 R. Here you are, Sir.
 E. Spasibo, do svidaniya.
 R. Do svidaniya.

Egbert walked away pleased with himself and his courage to speak Russian. Even if it was limited to "thank you" and "goodbye", the bank clerk had seemed more impressed than his German secretary had been when he had practiced in the office. *Armed* with rubles, he now felt in full control and, certain that he had left Murphy standing at the bank, he *set off* to find a taxi. Even if the driver couldn't speak English, surely he would understand Sheraton Palace Hotel. But where was the *taxi rank*?

- E. Hello, the Sheraton Palace Hotel please?
 R. Hotel?
 E. Yes, the Sheraton Palace.
 R. Ah, Sheraton, please.

Egbert got into the taxi while the driver put his luggage into the *boot* and sat back to enjoy the journey. With luck it should only take half-an-hour. What he hadn't noticed was Murphy slipping into the seat beside him and, at this time in the evening, traffic in and around Moscow was at its busiest and seemed to be going at a *snail's pace*. Oh well, thought Egbert, maybe I will forget the walk and just *settle for* dinner – Murphy willing. ■

<i>armed with</i>	<i>mit etwas ausgerüstet sein</i>
<i>ATM (automatic teller machine)</i>	<i>Geldautomat</i>
<i>blankly</i>	<i>verdutzt</i>
<i>boot</i>	<i>Kofferraum</i>
<i>briefcase</i>	<i>Aktenkoffer</i>
<i>catch someone's eye</i>	<i>den Blick fangen</i>
<i>didn't quite catch</i>	<i>hat nicht gehört</i>
<i>disconcerting</i>	<i>beunruhigend</i>
<i>heart began to sink</i>	<i>sein Herz fiel ihm in die Hose</i>
<i>mumble</i>	<i>nuscheln</i>
<i>PA (public address) system</i>	<i>Lautsprecheranlage</i>
<i>push your luck, to</i>	<i>das Glück herausfordern</i>
<i>set off, to</i>	<i>sich auf dem Weg machen</i>
<i>settle for, to</i>	<i>sich mit etwas zufriedengeben</i>
<i>shrug your shoulders</i>	<i>mit den Schultern zucken</i>
<i>snail's pace</i>	<i>Schnecken tempo</i>
<i>tannoy system</i>	<i>Lautsprecheranlage</i>
<i>taxi rank</i>	<i>Taxistand</i>
<i>trolley</i>	<i>Gepäckwagen</i>

Language Notes

Egbert's conversations were mainly dealing with asking for and receiving information. This is fairly formal language so, notice how often modal verbs "could" and "would" are used.

I wonder if you could help me?
. . . if you could write your name here
I would like to change some Euros
How much would you like to change?
Then could you change €100 . . .
How would you like the money, sir?

Murphy's laws:

Everything takes longer than you think.

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

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