

Kingdom of God. And at every turn there is ample proof of the purifying effect of experience and a touching humility in recalling it. There are many signs just now of the strength of the Catholic revival in France, and this latest volume of an already historic series is assuredly one of the most hopeful.

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RED ARMY SOLDIER

WE all know Tommy Atkins. In two wars he has become symbolic of the British soldier. We know what he thinks, how he will react to most events, and his general likes and dislikes. He has been hailed as 'Britain's best ambassador'. In foreign countries his demeanour has been one of kindly tolerance, cheerfulness, and some degree of self-effacement. All in all, these things have built themselves into a reasonably understandable character.

What of Ivan Ivanovitch, 'Tommy Atkins' of the Red Army? There are three million of his kind in occupied Europe, stretching from the Balkans to the Arctic, and from the Russian frontier to Central Germany. Can we define a general character for Ivan Ivanovitch, whose rôle is such a significant part of the international play being performed in Europe today?

I have known a hundred Ivans. I have seen him in this aftermath of war. I have seen the results of his handiwork. But my knowledge is coloured by the difference between the Oriental and the Occidental minds. This barrier is a constant difficulty, necessitating a re-examination of every event. For instance, there was the Red Army soldier who deprived an Austrian of his wireless set, then, as he was leaving, dug his free hand beneath his tunic, brought forth a jade ornament and thrust it at the Austrian, saying: 'A present for me from Hungary. I give it to you for this present' (pointing to wireless set). The interest of the situation lies in the word, 'present'. Was the expression meant humorously, as you and I might have said it? Or did the Red Army soldier interpret finding as keeping? Closer acquaintance with Ivan shows that it is legal for the Red Army soldier to possess what he finds, as long as the article is not required by the State. Hence, there was no humour or veiled sarcasm in the soldier's remark to the Austrian.

Then, also, there is the difference between 'Muscovite' Ivan and 'Kasakh' Ivan, as much difference as exists between a Londoner

and a native of Togoland. This difficulty could deny finding any solution to Ivan's character, were it not for Russia's war casualties. These ran into many millions, and, even more important, included practically the whole of Russia's European army. Russia's final, conquering army consisted of almost all Asiatics. Certainly those whom we met in the occupation forces were nearly one hundred per cent. Asiatic types.

This is the Ivan we must examine. What has been his background? Essentially he is a peasant, with a near-strain of the nomad. His home has been the inhospitable steppe. His life has been an unending struggle against hardship. Civilisation has been a remote, unknown world. Authority, wielded by some unseen power, is exercised by the local farm overseer, whose word is law.

Ivan has seen no railway, no motor car (except, perhaps a farm tractor or harvester flitting through at certain seasons of the year), no town, no electric light, no coal, no bricks, no clothes (other than rude local products). In fact, Ivan's world has been bounded by the few acres surrounding his hut, and his associates the few humans and animals which could co-exist alongside him.

From time to time the overseer would call together the workers of the communal farm and announce the 'State' requirements of the farm, which meant the quantity of the produce which the farm must send away to the uncomprehended world outside. The declaration would be accompanied by a Communist harangue, interspersed with the words, '*Tyerpit nada*' (You must suffer), and ending with the promise of the eventual Elysium on earth.

Ivan lived crudely. His home was built from thin branches of scrub (for trees were non-existent) and walled with cow-dung. The overseer probably enjoyed a more luxurious dwelling built from mud bricks. The animals lived in the open through hot, dry summer and cold, icy winter.

It was from this backwater of civilization that Ivan stepped on to the battlefield of Europe. It needs little thought to imagine the bewilderment of this uncultured mind suddenly confronted with a succession of experiences passing before it like a lightning kaleidoscope. In a few short months the experiences of a normal lifetime were thrust at Ivan.

This is no Ivan of the Red Army poster, portrayed as fighting for the Cause against Nazism. He hardly recognises the Russian language of Europe, much less friend and foe in this fantastic world.

It was, nevertheless, this Ivan who fell on Europe, as his forefathers had done centuries before. Except for weapons, clothes, and mobility. Ivan might easily have been one of his own forbears of a thousand years ago. Both had lived the timeless life of the steppe,

and fought against the same rude elements. The one difference was that Ivan had become a squatter, whereas his ancestors had retained freedom of movement.

Ivan came to Rumania, first land of permitted excesses. He saw houses which surpassed his wildest dreams of magnificence; roads that did not dive into two-foot-deep potholes at every step; sleek motor cars that swept past in a swirl of dust, with no oxen between the limbers!

He saw great, beautiful buildings—churches—in which no one lived—what prodigality! He saw farmyards alive with cattle, poultry, pigs; all so fat and well cared for. Horses stood in the pastures by the hundred—possession of one would have made the Kasakh owner a millionaire! He saw rivers that held fish, and which threw up a bountiful harvest in response to half a dozen hand-grenades, or even a short attack with a sub-machine gun.

Then Hungary, more fabulous. And, finally, Austria, where East really meets West. Little wonder that Ivan stopped in astonishment at the sight of the Ringstrasse with its grey stone architecture. Not surprising that he attacked the Vienna Workers' Flats, under the impression that anything so magnificent must be capitalistic—whatever the word 'capitalistic' might mean other than 'enemy'.

We can now see Ivan free from the restraint of war. His actions and reactions become observable. His character, under the impact of the West, is being formed. We are on solid ground.

Remember the allegations of Russian excesses, the denials, the half-acceptance, and the final generalization: 'It is admitted that certain excesses have been committed but these are frowned upon by the Red Army authorities'.

In plain words, this was Ivan satisfying his lust. No amount of poetry, no turning a blind eye, no half-truths can alter the fact that Ivan sought out women whenever he reached a new halting-place. More than that, he commandeered and turned hundreds of thousands of women into camp followers, into the personal chattels of Red Army soldiers.

No one has told the intimate story of these unfortunate women, except in broad terms. What is wrong with truth today, that proven facts become distorted by fear of offence? What picture of tragedy can be conceived by the reader of such a phrase as, 'Certain excesses have been committed'? Does that tell the story of the fifty-five years old Hungarian woman who was uprooted from her home and family in Budapest, and made the domestic help, the unwilling concubine of three Red Army soldiers? There is such a woman. She was employed by British Military Government, in Austria, after she escaped

from the Russians. Her nights remain filled with turbulent dreams of the horrors she underwent.

This woman was but one of hundreds of thousands. Perhaps twenty were herded in one lorry which I passed when driving through the Russian zone of Austria last autumn. The women lay slumped on the sideboards of the lorry. They were Austrians, Hungarians, Rumanians, and heaven knows what other races. Their eyes were dull and lifeless. The momentary flicker of life and hope that filled them as they saw me crawling past in the opposite direction, died out almost as it was born. I hurried past, ashamed of my own impotence, as I have never been before.

I am no prude. Six years of war made sure that any illusions I had remaining would be destroyed. But this open white slavery frightened me. It was unbelievably anachronistic; and unbelievably real.

In August last year I was privileged to form one of the party which took over the province of Styria from the Russians who had been in occupation for five months. We were able to investigate in detail the many rumours of Russian conduct. The results of the investigation were more astounding than the rumours! Even now I find it hard to believe the attested facts.

Wholesale rape was a common story. When I left Austria, the offspring being born provided the living testimony that rumour had not lied in this direction. The Austrian authorities permitted abortion where fatherhood was claimed to be Russian.

Investigation of rumours that Ivan, and his comrades, had instituted a scale of payments for non-interference with women, showed that some such system was employed. The Austrian allegations that the Russians had a graduated scale according to the age of the threatened victim were not borne out. The lack of selectivity—by western standards—of the Red Army soldier was only too evident from the composition of their caravanserais. There were countless cases, however, where women had saved themselves from interference by offering Red Army soldiers watches and jewellery.

This brings us to Ivan's love of baubles, the watch holding the place of honour. Nothing equalled Ivan's adoration of watches and clocks, but primarily watches. Incredible stories are told about watches. There is the story of the Red Army man who walked into a jeweller's shop, carrying a grandfather clock, which he deposited on the counter with the remark: 'Tomorrow I will come back for the six watches which you will make for me from this.' There are many variants of this story, including the one in which the soldier hands over six 'broken' watches for one old timepiece, the recipient of the six watches discovering that all they need is winding up!

Any of these stories could be true or not. I have seen Red Army men snatching at people's wrists as they walked past, hoping to find a watch. I have seen six watches fastened round the wrists of one man!

Next to watches, bright jewellery—not necessarily valuable—was much in demand. High in the list was the linen sheet. This was a source of puzzlement at first, but the solution proved to be that the sheets were torn into strips, and used for sending parcels back to the U.S.S.R. Nothing else but sheets would do for this, and the much stronger hessian was refused. Heaven knows what accident began this chain of mimicry.

Furniture was a high priority, but beds enjoyed a dubious standing. In one post I visited I found the Russians sleeping on the floor, on straw, alongside perfectly good beds, which remained unoccupied.

I have heard much of the Russian orgies of insensate destruction. I actually watched the Russians evacuate an Austrian *schloss* (castle) and was the first Britisher to examine the place after their departure. The courtyard was a piled-up mass of broken furniture and furnishings. The windows had been burst from their frames as the soldiers hurled the furniture into the courtyard. Even the spick-and-span fire-engine was hacked with an axe, as though in protest against its neat appearance, but not rendered unusable.

The terrified *schloss* staff told me of the wild looting that had taken place, but added that it was carried out in the greatest good humour! This supports my belief that the destruction wrought by the Red Army bears no relation to revenge or hatred, such as is frequently claimed. Instead, I believe that it is a mixture of ignorance of value and an inability to comprehend a simple order. I fully believe that the failure of a Sèvres tea-service to rebound, intact, from the courtyard, must have mystified the thrower. Ivan's immaturity, and lack of elementary experiences, must be recognized before his actions can be even partially understood.

My own efforts to find accommodation in what had been an area of Russian occupation revealed the most astonishing things. There was a predilection for plumbing apparatus, but of the most haphazard kind. A cistern taken from here, a basin from there, a connecting pipe from somewhere lese. A gas boiler stolen but the gas element left behind. Handles of water taps and lengths of piping removed, or just the wash-basin ripped out.

Gradually, one could form a coherent picture. Ivan was mystified by such wonders. The flushing of a lavatory was a shattering discovery. His ideas of what caused the flush were often at variance with best plumbing practices, hence the arbitrary extraction of a particular part of the complete unit! Kitchen sinks were used as eating bowls for the invariable hash on which the Red Army apparently existed.

This was luxury indeed. Knives and forks were beyond their use as eating utensils.

But surely I have said enough to show that Ivan is basically uncivilized, despite his modern armament, clothes and veneer of Russian diplomacy. Ivan remains, beneath it all, a simple, uncultured worker, ignorant, illiterate and alien to Europe. He is much too little advanced to assimilate European culture as yet.

What of his effect upon the prestige of Russia in the eyes of Europe? There is only one word—disastrous. Ivan has divided East from West far more efficiently than the twenty-five years' old Russian 'iron curtain.' Not even the re-erection of this wall, further west, by Russia, can blot out the memory of Ivan from Central and Eastern Europe.

And what of the effect of Europe upon Ivan? The 'peasant' Ivan has made no bones about it. He has told the local inhabitants, once intercourse has been achieved, that he is never going back to Russia! The better-educated Ivan has reacted more viciously. He has seen disillusionment. The propaganda of Moscow has collapsed. The outside world, peopled by the masses living in unfurnished caves, half-starved, and slave-driven by a few 'capitalists,' hasn't been like that at all. Red Army soldiers of this type have been heard to say, openly, that when they return to Moscow they will shoot Stalin for his lies, if they get the chance!

The educated, but untravelled, Ivans are palpably living in a bemused state. The vehicles of so much propaganda, the pride in their military achievements undimmed, they do not know what line to take towards their allies. Occasionally they will admit, in a burst of candour, that Russia has far to go to reach parity with the rest of Europe. Normally, however, they maintain a close mouth about their backwardness, and adopt a sneering attitude towards the accomplishments they see around them. This mind, in its own confusion and complexity, is beyond analysis at present.

Far more important is the addition of the peasant Ivans—perhaps five million of them—who, collectively, promise to form a vocal, disruptive element within the U.S.S.R. The Ivan who has sent a shudder of horror through Europe may well send a shudder of horror through the U.S.S.R. when he returns to the land from whence he came.

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