

A Parson Out of Prison



"Not the slightest," he said. "Jerry allowed the padres to go out and visit the working-parties in the coal-mines and sawmills. Some of the chaps there were captured at Dunkirk and I think they got a great kick out of seeing an officer and a padre to whom they could talk about anything on their minds. They knew they were not forgotten."

In camp, Padre Hopkins had ten theological students in training, and he conducted confirmation classes. As there was no bishop in the camp he prepared men for confirmation on their arrival home.

Sermons delivered in camp were supposed to be censored in case a padre slipped across a piece of propaganda against the Germans. But censorship was never actually carried into effect. Usually an interpreter sat in the chapel during the service but there were no interruptions. The guards themselves were "browned off."

They got slack towards the end, but the clergy-prisoners took good care to give them no excuse for complaint.

The "Horror March"

Most returned prisoners-of-war remember with bitterness the forced march of 500 miles from Landsdorff, in Silesia, to a place near Frankfurt. Padre Hopkins did not have much to say about it, beyond remarking that it was "pretty terrible." Some days there was a fairly short march and sometimes a rest of one day in seven. But the going, in two feet of snow and with very poor rations, made the experience a memorable one. At first the guards behaved very badly. They were truculent and overbearing and this, coming after a long spell behind barbed wire, made the march anything but pleasant.

"What effect, would you say, did all this have on the troops?" we asked, suggesting that few men could undergo such treatment and not be full of hate.

"Well," replied the padre with a smile, "people must not forget that a soldier is just a civilian in khaki for the time being. How would you feel? That is a question to be answered by the individual. But I'll tell you one thing. Some good came out of it all. Any man who did not learn a few lessons would be very hard to teach. On the other hand, the good that these lessons will do us must depend on how long we remember them. They did show us the need for a better spirit of co-operation between men. A lot of the prisoners spoke openly of their finer appreciation of the simple things of life—yes, the clean tablecloth and the cup and saucer instead of the dirty, tin mug, if you understand what I'm driving at. Such little, simple things became of more importance than all the dance halls and theatres. In short, the chaps will now appreciate home life instead of taking it for granted. Get me?"

Like the others, Padre Hopkins had not heard a great deal of New Zealand news. He was particularly interested in the inquiry into the Dominion's licensing laws. All the troops—or most of them—would probably agree, after what they

had seen overseas, that the laws in New Zealand governing the sale of liquor were due for change, possible on English lines.

Padre Hopkins has a souvenir. It is a walking-stick with a handle of some light metal and shaped like an ice-axe, with the wooden part studded with coloured spots made from tooth-brush handles. He

is carrying it in the photograph here. It was made by an inventive Russian prisoner, and to use the padre's own words, he "pinched it from a Jerry officer."

His plans? They are the vaguest at the moment. He will probably do as most returned soldiers do—have a good rest and a look round before settling down again. "But I would like to say," he added over his shoulder as he hurried to join the queue signing the disembarkation papers, "that the Royal Empire Society—I think that is the name—were wonderful to us in London. In fact they were simply grand to the troops in their hospitality."

PROFILE

IVAN ZIABKIN

Soviet Minister to New Zealand



me my opportunity. I went to the Polytechnic Institute of Leningrad where I studied electrical engineering."

ON graduating, M. Ziabkin remained at the Institute as a lecturer, training engineers who were needed in their thousands for the vast construction programme embarked on by the Soviet Government. In a few years he became Dean of the Faculty and a Soviet citizen of considerable prominence.

When he moved from Leningrad to Moscow he was invited to join the Foreign Affairs Department. It is a common Soviet practice to give important diplomatic responsibilities to persons of intelligence and achievements, whatever their callings, and regardless of the fact that they may have had no special training to represent their country abroad.

M. Ziabkin's wife is also an engineer. They have a young son.

IN an interview given in South Africa, the Soviet Minister said that he had three brothers and a sister, one of the brothers a Leningrad citizen, but how they had fared during the war he had not heard. He had his fears. There were few Russian families which had not had bereavements since 1941.

In spite of this, the spirits of the Russians must have been at a high pitch, to judge from a later passage in the same interview. M. Ziabkin was asked whether people danced much in Russia.

"Dance! Even in war time in Moscow, the many large dance halls are crowded in the week-ends."

"And what do they dance? Folk dances?"

This brought a hearty peal of laughter.

"Jazz! Russia is jazz crazy. The same as you young people here. When I was a boy of 18 or 19 I went dancing every single night. At home, on October day, May day, the people dance in the huge squares of the cities . . . The people have a deep capacity for knowing how to take their pleasures and enjoying them. Every little factory, every little organisation, every little club has got its dance bands playing good rhythmic jazz, with a few waltzes thrown in."

For the last three years M. Ziabkin has been Consul-General of the U.S.S.R. in South Africa. The exact date of his arrival in New Zealand is not yet known. "Presently" is the official answer to questions about it.

CURIOUS as to what changes, if any, had been produced in the mental outlook of a parson who had spent four years in a German prison camp, *The Listener* interviewed Captain H. I. Hopkins, C.F. (above), formerly of St. Peter's Church, Kensington, Timaru, on his return to New Zealand recently with other prisoners-of-war. The padre had sailed with the Second Echelon and was taken prisoner in Crete in 1941. He was diffident about going deeply into the effect of war on a man's philosophy; instead he preferred to speak—and then with some diffidence—of his experiences.

"As a matter of fact, I was lucky," he told us. "After September, 1942, I was put into Stalag 8B, later called Stalag 344, where there were 10,000 troops. There was plenty to occupy me; I found that I had a full-time job as padre. There were two hospitals there with about 300 beds in each. These were usually filled with men from Dieppe and I was in and out all the time trying to cheer them up and holding regular services on Sundays and short services daily in the barracks chapel."

No Restriction on Religion

We asked if there was any restriction on his movements or in the practice of his faith.

(continued from previous page)

for his bands and orchestras he considers it necessary to be able to play, or at least to understand thoroughly, all the instruments. The result is that at various times—with the Kiwi party in the Pacific for instance—he has played piano, piano-accordion, clarinet, trumpet or saxophone according to the demands of the occasion.

Since his return to civil life last November he has had a weekly session at IYA with his own orchestra and has been pianist with the studio orchestra. The recital of the Liszt concerto on August 3 will be his first broadcast of this kind since he returned.

FROM material supplied to us by the Society for Closer Relations with Russia, we are able to piece together an impression (what Americans call a "profile") of M. Ivan Ziabkin, who has been appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the U.S.S.R. in New Zealand. From the same source we have obtained the photograph above.

Pen Portrait: "Short, thickset, with hair turning to grey and a pair of capable hands. Hands of an engineer. A friendly, easy man with twinkling eyes set in a laughter-creased face."

Self-Portrait: "I am the son of a worker. My family had always been workers in the city of Leningrad and I suppose that I too would have been an unskilled worker had it not been for the Revolution. The change of system gave