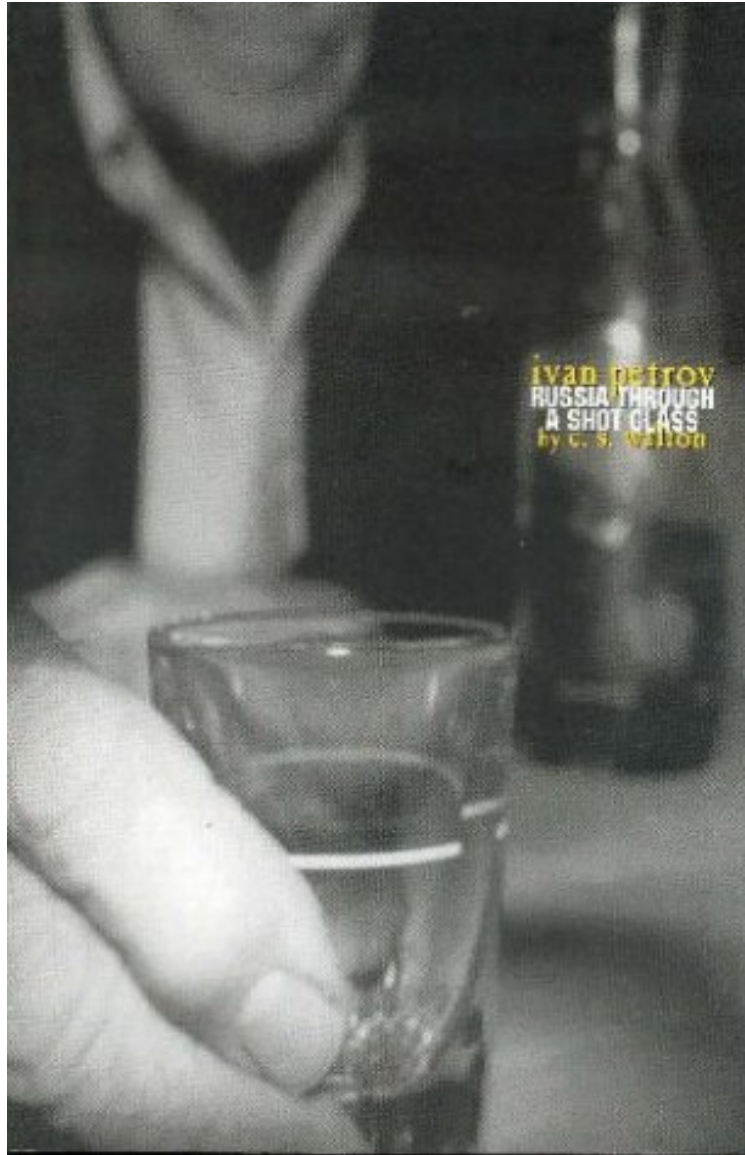


[E-BOOK] Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass

## Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass

C. S. Walton

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**C. S. Walton : Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. As Fine A Memoir As You Will ReadBy Foster CorbinIn 1996 Ivan Petrov began telling this his "life story" to C. S. Walton, and what a story indeed it is. The events of his life with never a dull paragraph read like a novel. It is at once a story of a life of poverty in Russia during the time of the former

Soviet Union (Petrov was born in 1935), a road memoir, a treatise on homelessness, an account of life in prison (Petrov was in and out of prison for petty crimes usually associated with drinking), and ultimately a sad but never self-pitying commentary on alcoholism. It is every bit as good as the best examples from these genres, notably Woody Guthrie's *BOUND FOR GLORY*, George Jackson's *SOLEDAD BROTHER* and Lars Eighner's *TRAVELS WITH LISBETH*. As a youngster Petrov lived in Chapaevsk near a prison and a statue of Stalin and by the age of fifteen had been drunk on vodka twelve times. For the rest of his life, as he remembers it, he is never far from "hair-of-the-dog" and the possibility of prison is very real to him. As a child, Petrov is beaten by his stepfather Dobrinin (his father is in prison) but he remembers also his step-grandmother who loved gladioli and asters and French novels. Petrov's tale is filled with appropriate imagery; and as horrific as some of the events he recounts are, he remembers them often with delightful humor. Midge-bites make mosquitoes "seem as harmless as butterflies." One morning after a night of hard drinking, Petrov feels as if a reindeer herd has spent the night in his mouth. And Soviet railway stations by their warmth and 24 hour beer stands attract tramps [like Petrov] "like wasps to a jamjar." His story of why the mourners at a wake could not identify the meat in dumplings made from a slaughtered cow (the poor, senile cook had gotten one of her breasts ground up in the meat mincer) will make you wince but smile; his account of why another drunk, one Klava, always told time as eight o'clock will make you laugh out loud. Petrov, although he never completely gets sober-- at least in these pages-- ultimately attempts to find some meaning in his existence and accepts responsibility for the life he has lived. He concludes that you can neither love nor hate people, "when they are all so different." He understands (as do most thinking adults) that he will not set the world on fire. He accepts or becomes "less disturbed" by his physical disability (he has a "crippled leg") and learns that he "could live without a home, possessions or human companionship." Certainly for one who has seen and lived through all the horrors of poverty, alcoholism and homelessness as this man did, Petrov's world view could have been much bleaker. He reminds me of one of Robert Browning's characters who was comforted by what he could have been and did not become. As I read this fine and thoughtful book, I wondered how Ms. Walton and Mr. Petrov met, did she tape his story, what was the Western country where they met, is he still alive-- he would have been sixty-one when they met-- did he ever get sober? *RUSSIA THROUGH A SHOT GLASS* is as fine a memoir as I have read. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Ivan This book will make you start or stop drinking. Great! By A Customer The big personal question facing everyone in life is how to live. In the former Soviet Union the choices were none too many. The life and times of Ivan Petrov is a portrayal of state interference run amok. It's also about a person too far gone to care. Drunk as a skunk and stumbling through the wasteland of the country, Ivan tells it like it was with his eyes bleary and swollen but still wide open. At times, I was horrified reading this book. At other times I laughed out loud. That's the great part about it. Despite his dire circumstances, there was still a sense of humor about his given situation. The whole book speaks to the human condition. It makes you consider your own life and the choices you've made. An excellent primer and first hand look at the former Soviet Union. I loved this book!

The story of Ivan Petrov is a true story. C.S. Walton met Ivan Petrov in a city in the West in 1996. Over the course of two years he told Walton his life story. It is the story of a man who, in the face of complete social collapse, chose to be a wandering drunk.

From Library Journal The failings of the former Soviet Union come vividly to life in this searing biography of a self-described vagabond alcoholic in post-World War II Russia. Ivan Petrov says that while some tried to make careers as informers or bureaucrats, he chose to become a drunk and that his readers, under the circumstances, would have done the same. British writer Walton met Petrov, now living in the West, in 1996 and spent two years interviewing him and putting his story together. This first-person narrative details his wanderings, which embraced Soviet jails, hospitals, camps, and clinics. Told with a combination of humor, horror, and pathos, his story is not pleasant, but it forcefully illustrates how an oppressive political regime contributed to the destruction of the lives of so many of its citizens. Recommended for all libraries. ARon Ratliff, Chapman H.S. Lib., Manhattan, KS Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "... part roaring, Rabelaisian tale and part social case study, with a dash of existential rebellion." -- Dr. William Brumfield, author of *Lost Russia* "It's not a pretty sight, but its truth is worth knowing." -- Frank Bourgholtzer, former NBC Moscow Bureau Chief "Recommended for all libraries." -- Library Journal About the Author C.S. Walton was born in London in 1956. She was educated at St. Paul's Girls' School and the London School of Economics. Her occupations have included pavement-painting in Berlin, house-painting in California, selling ice cream in Canada and teaching English in Brazil. She has traveled extensively in Europe, Asia and the Americas. After a visit to the USSR in 1979 she learned Russian, which helped her to establish herself in a communal flat in Samara in 1993. She was curious to find out what life had really been like behind the iron curtain.