

# **A visit to Eastern Europe**

by John Waterhouse

**(excerpt)**

The play was first performed at Salford Arts Theatre on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

Cast:-

Frank, an English businessman.....	Paul Green
Marie Anne, a French businesswoman .....	Jay Hobday
Karen, an English airline stewardess. ....	Amy Forrest
Leni, a German airline stewardess.....	Susi Wrenshaw
Joseph, a hotel worker.....	Charlie Carolle
Irina, a hotel receptionist.....	Becky Harrison
Jindra, a hotel manager.....	Irene Longworth
Olga, an Army Major.....	Sharon Heywood

## A visit to Eastern Europe.

'A visit to Eastern Europe' is set some ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1990. All the action takes place in the lobby/bar area of a small hotel in the capital city of an un-named former-Soviet bloc country.

A salesman from a Northern Engineering company is on his first overseas business trip, in the hope of winning a big machined-parts order. He is very ignorant of foreign culture and bullish about securing the order until he meets a young French woman from a competing company. Two airline stewardesses (one German and one English) arrive at the hotel and the four begin to talk about cultural differences in the lobby bar area.

A military coup suddenly forces everyone to adapt to changes circumstances and national and cultural differences take on a deeper significance.

### **Cast –**

**Frank Hodgekiss** - a businessman from England – 30's

**Marie-Anne Duvet** - a businesswoman from France – early 30's

**Karen** - an English airline stewardess – late 20's

**Leni** – a German airline stewardess – 30's

**Irina** – a receptionist – 20's

**Joseph** – a bell boy – 20's

**Jindra** – a hotel manager – 30's

**Olga** - The revolutionary (female) – 30's-40's

**Act 1 Scene 1 The hotel lobby. Early evening.**

(Frank is checking in at the hotel reception desk)

**Frank:** Passport? Yes, it's here.....somewhere If I can find the bloody thing. Here.

**Irina:** Thank you Sir. That's a reservation for six nights, single room, en-suite.

**Frank:** That's it.

**Irina:** Will you be wanting breakfast as well?

**Frank:** That's included isn't it?

**Irina:** Breakfast is extra Sir. \$6.00.

**Frank:** Oh spare me; I thought it was included.

**Irina:** I'm sorry Sir.

**Frank:** All right. Breakfast as well. Must 'ave a full breakfast before work.

**Irina:** Breakfast is a buffet Sir, available from 6.00 am; a selection of local fruit and cereals with bread and jam.

**Frank:** No sausage, bacon and egg?

**Irina:** I'm sorry Sir. No sausage, bacon or egg.

**Frank:** How I am supposed to survive six days without a proper breakfast for God's sake?

**Irina:** I'm sorry Sir. I hope you enjoy the hotel breakfast.

**Frank:** Brilliant!

**Irina:** I hope you have a pleasant stay Sir. (*rings bell – enter JOSEPH*). Room 28 (hands keys).

**Joseph:** This way Sir.

**Irina:** There is a complementary welcome drink in the lobby bar available when you are ready Sir.

**Frank:** Thanks; I'll need it after the journey getting here.

**Irina:** And please don't use the shower for the moment. The maintenance man will be over to fix it....very soon.

**Frank:** Brilliant!

*(exit FRANK and JOSEPH).*

*(The phone rings)*

**Irina:** Good evening ,The Volga Falls Hotel. Yes, we have availability for tonight. One single room.....Budgetair. Thank you. And the name of the guest?....Miss.....K.....Wheatley. Thank you Sir. Yes, it's on account. Thank you *(puts down phone)*. *(Enter JINDRA.)* We have another booking for tonight. From the Sheraton. Budgetair have had a flight delayed.

**Jindra:** Just one person?

**Irina:** The rest of the crew are staying at the Sheraton.

**Jindra:** So why have we've just got one booking?

**Irina:** She volunteered to come here!

**Jindra:** Strange! The hotel is almost empty. They could have all come here!

**Irina:** One is better than nothing; we need all the business we can find!

**Jindra:** I know; I know. If you see any newspapers lying around, put them out of sight. I think things will blow over but there's no point worrying the guests.

**Iriana:** I've already done that. And taken CNN off the TV system.

**Jindra:** They'll find out soon enough if things hot up in any case.

**Iriana:** There's a Mademoiselle Duvette due to check in. Mr Caspari in Room 21 has asked to see the manager. Something about a rat in the bedroom.

**Jindra:** Ok, ok. *(enter JOSEPH)* Room 21. There are rats under the bed.

**Joseph:** Room 21? I'll get the cat. *(exits)*.

**Jindra:** *(calls after him)* It might need two cats! And don't forget Room 16! And if they won't pay....*(in different tone as MARIE-ANNE enters)* Good evening *(exits)*.

**Marie-Anne:** Good evening. I think you have a reservation for me. Duvet?

**Irina:** Every bed Madame.

**Marie Anne:** Pardon?

**Irina:** Every bed has a duvet Madame.

**Marie Anne:** My name is Duvet! Marie Anne Duvet.

**Irina:** Duvette.

**Marie Anne:** Duvet.

**Irina:** Duvette.

**Marie Anne:** Duvet.

**Irina:** Duvette.

**Marie Anne:** DUVET.

**Irina:** Ah; Madame Duvette!

**Marie-Anne:** Duvet.

**Irina:** Oh yes of course. We were expecting you.

**Marie-Anne:** Evidently What did she mean about 'cats'.

**Irina:** A problem with rats I think. You are in Room 27. If you could wait a minute please, I'll call the bellboy.

**Marie-Anne:** Merci.

**Irina:** (the phone rings). Reception. I'll be with you in a minute Sir. *(to MARIE ANNE)*  
The bellboy will be here soon Mademoiselle.

**Marie-Anne:** It does not matter. If I could just have the room key.

**Irina:** Of course *(speaks to phone)* Sorry about that ...the shower.....I'll get someone over right away Madame. Thank you *(puts down phone)*.  
Ok Madame, Room 27. Let's have a look.....Here you are.

**Marie-Anne:** Merci. *(enter JINDRA as MARIE-ANNE picks up her cases)*.

**Jindra:** Good evening Madame. I am the manager.

**Marie-Anne:** Oh, good evening *(starts to leave)*.

**Jindra:** Oh please Madame, we cannot have you carrying your own bags.

**Marie-Anne:** It's no problem.

**Jindra:** Oh no Madame. I'll summon the bellboy right away. *(exits into reception)*.

**Marie-Anne:** Really it is no problem.

**Irina:** The manager is very proud of the hotel's reputation

**Marie-Anne:** Yes, I'm sure; especially regarding pest control.*(enter JOSEPH)*.

**Joseph:** Please, your bags.

**Irina:** Could you tell the maintenance man if you see him, room 28....shower problem.

**Joseph:** No problem *(they both exit. IRINA leaves the desk and goes over to the bar)*.

**Irina:** Oh Joseph *(JOSEPH returns)*. Put any newspapers you see out of sight. If anyone asks about CCN, just say there's a technical fault

**Jospeh:** Understood. *(exits)*

*(Enter FRANK)*

**Irina:** The man will be over about the shower very soon Sir.

**Frank:** Oh. I assumed he'd be a while so I've come for that welcome drink you promised me.

**Irina:** He won't be long Sir.

**Frank:** Well I'm here now.

**Irina:** Ok, what would you like?

**Frank:** A Guinness please

**Irina:** I'm sorry Sir we do not have any Guinness.

**Frank:** Don't have Guinness! I've drunk Guinness all over Europe! What ave' yer got?

**Irina:** We have local vodka and local beer Sir.

**Frank:** No English beer?

**Irina:** I'm afraid not Sir.

**Frank:** German lager? *(IRINA shakes her head)*.All right. I'll try your local beer

**Irina:** *(pours beer from a bottle)* Here you are.

**Frank:** Thanks love. Ah (*takes big gulp and spews back into glass*). Bloody hell! What is this?

**Irina:** Zagari! The local beer Sir.

**Frank:** It's 'orrible! Bloody foul. No decent breakfast! No proper beer! How am I going to survive the week here?

**Irina:** I'm sorry Sir. I hope you find something in our culture that you like.

**Frank:** I'm not here on a cultural excursion! This is a business trip.

**Irina:** (*washing glasses*) Business Sir?

**Frank:** Yes, business. I'm an export manager.

**Irina:** Ah, you are on a fact finding mission.

**Frank:** No. As a matter of fact, I'm here for some important meetings and so I need to be properly sustained. That means a good breakfast in the morning and a good beer after work.

**Irina:** Hmm. I'll see what I can do to make your stay more agreeable.

**Frank:** I hope you can; I can't be drinking that stuff every night (*starts to drink the beer*). Very important meetings!! So I can't afford to be stuck on the bog all week either!

**Irina:** I'm sure you won't be Sir. Try this (*hands a small glass*) on the house.

**Frank:** Ah brandy; ee' that tastes good. This isn't from Zagari is it?

**Irina:** Zagari? No, I think you'll find it's French.

**Frank:** One thing the Frogs do well; make brandy.

**Irene:** Our country was ruled by France for a short time; many years ago.

**Frank:** Oh! I thought it was Britain!

**Irina:** Not all the world was ruled by Britain, Sir.

**Frank:** No, I suppose not.

**Irina:** You must excuse me Sir. The barman will be here soon if you need anything else.

**Frank:** Fair enough (*exit IRINA. Finishes drink and goes to bar*). (*calls out*) Hello, hello! (*sees bell and rings it. Enter JOSEPH from behind the bar in a barman's jacket*).



**Joseph:** Can I help you Sir?

**Frank:** Yes; another brandy please.

**Joseph:** Here you are Sir.

**Frank:** Ta (*enter MARIE-ANNE in smart casual clothes*).

**Marie-Anne:** Bon soir. A Cointreau, s'il vous plait!

**Joseph:** Voila Madame.

**Marie-Anne:** Merci.

**Frank:** Bloody 'ell, You can get fancy French drinks here but you can't get a proper beer!

**Marie-Anne:** Ah, you are English.

**Frank:** Damn right I am.

**Marie-Anne:** You have come to the wrong place mon ami, for your...English beer. Permit me to introduce to you to something a little more.....delicate. Please, another Cointreau for my friend.

**Frank:** I've drunk beer on business trips all over Europe! Not enough je ne se quo for you?

**Marie-Anne:** Beer is...beer.

**Frank:** All right, go on then. I'll try one with you.

**Marie-Anne:** Please (*hands FRANK a drink and they sit down together*). Is it to your taste?

**Frank:** (*sips a bit*) Hmm. A bit sweet but...no....it's all right. They don't give you much do they?

**Marie-Anne:** Government regulations. Everything is in strict measures.

**Frank:** Cheers.

**Marie-Anne:** Sante!

**Frank:** Not bad at all.(mobile rings) excuse me a minute (takes phone) Frank Hodgekiss; oh 'ello Pam. Yeah checked in ok....no.....probably see the boss tomorrow.....ok.....if you tell them I'll arrange the samples as soon as I get back.....ok....thanks a lot....bye (puts away phone) That was the office. (picks up glass) Cheers.

**Marie-Anne:** Sante'. So what brings you to this part of Europe?

**Frank:** Business. I'm here to close a very important contract.  
What's your line?

**Marie-Anne:** My line?

**Frank:** What does your company do?

**Marie-Anne:** We are in.....engineering.

**Frank:** That's interesting; what do you make exactly?

**Marie-Anne:** Piping and valves; for the chemical industry.

**Frank:** What a coincidence! we're into that as well.

**Marie-Anne:** Ah, we are colleagues then (phone rings) excuse me (takes mobile) Ah darling, so nice to hear from you; I've only just checked in.....it is beautiful here.....I wish you were here with me.....yes, the room has a lovely big bed.....can I call you back in half an hour?.....miss you too (blows kiss).

**Frank:** Was that your boss?

**Marie-Anne:** No, it was my fiancé!

**Frank:** Oh. Yes, of course. So then er....you and me, we're colleagues in the same business....or should that be competitors? (laughs)

**Marie-Anne:** Say colleagues.

**Frank:** I travel overseas quite regularly. The board think I'm very good at relating to foreign cultures!

**Marie-Anne:** You like culture?

**Frank:** Oh, yes. Well you have to in my game. You know; take an interest in the people you're visiting.

**Marie-Anne:** Ah, to help you make contacts.

**Frank:** Aye....but there is a lot to see in this city. Perhaps you might like to join me?

**Marie-Anne:** Join you.