

Russian Actor Given Bottle of Blood After Backing Rebels in Ukraine Conflict

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Ivan Okhlobystin, a former Orthodox priest.

Russian actor Ivan Okhlobystin, known for his support of pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine, has been given a bottle filled with blood by a pro-Ukrainian activist in order to quell his "bloodthirstiness."

According to a video posted on Grani.ru news site, activist Valery Otstavnykh walked up to the stage during a concert by Okhlobystin in Tula on Friday night and presented the actor with a liquor bottle, marked with a label reading: "Blood, natural, first-degree freshness."

It is common in Russia for audience members to present flowers or souvenirs at the end of performances, and Okhlobystin seemed none the wiser as he accepted the bottle to a round of applause from the audience. He started to read out the label aloud, but stopped halfway and emitted a long: "Ooh!"

"This is the blood of Ukrainian and Russian people," said Otstavnykh, who is a member of Russia's Maidan Without Borders movement that declares solidarity with Ukraine's pro-European forces. "We know that Ivan Ivanovich [Okhlobystin] thirsts for blood. He constantly says that it's necessary to occupy Ukraine, to take tanks to Kiev, to conquer Odessa."

At this point, some members of the concert audience began whistling and booing the activist.

Otstavnykh also said in the video that the bottle he had prepared contained real blood, including some of his own, and footage showed medical workers drawing blood from activists' arms.

Actor Okhlobystin responded to the activist via Twitter later in the day, saying he did not like the taste of the liquid: "Cranberry juice runs in your veins ... sour, like your life."

Okhlobystin, a former Orthodox priest, is known for a number of incendiary statements. He has previously said that all gay people should be burned alive because they represent a "living danger" to his children, and suggested that Ebola victims were returning from the dead as zombies.

After his concert in Tula, the actor traveled to separatist-controlled eastern Ukraine to present his latest film and to gift a bottle of liquor to a Russian national fighting alongside the rebels and a fur coat for his wife, Ukraine's Ostrov.org news site reported.

The former priest posted a picture online of himself holding a Bible and a gold-colored chalice, adding: "God bless Novorossia." The term, which means "New Russia," is a separatist name for their region.

In a separate protest against many Russians' support for Ukraine's rebels, activists in mid-November staged an action near Moscow's Red Square, offering to quench their supposed bloodthirstiness.

As one of the activists lay on the ground covered in a yellow-and-blue Ukrainian flag, another extended a large mason jar filled with a red liquid to onlookers, saying: "Russians, taste Ukrainian blood."

While Ukraine and Western governments have accused Moscow of supplying weapons and professional servicemen to the separatists, the Kremlin claims that all Russian fighters in Ukraine are acting as "volunteers."

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