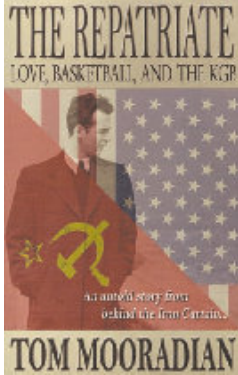


REVIEW: THE REPATRIATE: LOVE, BASKETBALL, AND THE KGB

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Advisor



The Repatriate: Love, Basketball, and the KGB, by Tom Mooradian. Seattle, WA: Moreradiant Publishing, 2008. 459 pages.

Adventure. Danger. Romance. From the very first pages, Tom Mooradian's newly published *The Repatriate* attracts the reader's attention. One is drawn into Mooradian's unlikely thirteen years spent in Soviet Armenia, feeling his initial excitement at the move, to his bitter disappointment, and struggle to escape.

The repatriation of Armenians from the Diaspora to Armenia, in 1946-1947, is a period that has been little studied. Personal accounts of the repatriation have been few and far between.

Tom Mooradian's decision in November 1947 to join a group of 150 Armenian-American expatriates led him on an unexpected separation of close to thirteen years from family and friends. Mooradian was a senior in high school when he made the fateful choice. Trapped behind the newly descending Iron Curtain, Mooradian, at age 19, had to struggle to eke out an existence with others who shared his same fate.

Following World War II, Soviet leaders called for members of the ethnic republics to return to their fatherland, to help rebuild the country. In the United States, the Armenian Progressive League spearheaded the effort that only succeeded in bringing about 300 Armenians from America back to Armenia.

Although he had initially been inspired to travel to the Soviet Armenia, Mooradian had little idea of how difficult it would be to leave Armenia once he arrived there. His saving grace was an ability to play basketball, which soon proved to be a godsend.

Mooradian's decision to leave the United States for Armenia was supported by his father only. His mother and brothers tried to persuade him to not go, but the youthful Mooradian ignored their advice, and embarked on the voyage.

In stark and expressive words, Mooradian describes life on the Russian ship *Rossia* that took him to

Armenia, and the many adventures along the way. He falls in love with a Jewish girl, but they are eventually separated as he arrives in Georgia first, and then Armenia.

Mooradian is filled with self-doubt as he replays the decision to travel to Armenia. But his adventures as a member of the Armenian national basketball team allow him luxuries that few others would enjoy. He is able to travel to foreign countries and to make the contacts that will ultimately lead to his freedom.

Mooradian was able to pack a lifetime of memories in the years that he lived in Soviet Armenia, and his eye-witness testimony is a vivid reminder of what many other Armenians suffered.

The Repatriate is a must read for all.

The Repatriate is available through the Wayne State University Press-<http://wsupress.wayne.edu>