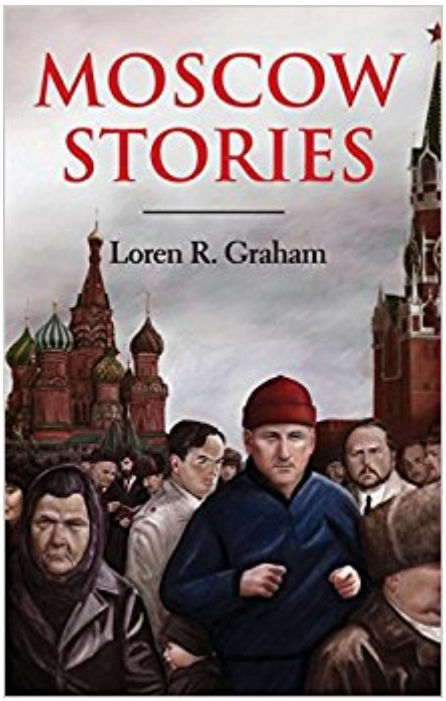
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Moscow Stories



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Synopsis

"Graham has brilliantly encapsulated and interwoven the major features of Soviet and post-Soviet history in his riveting stories.... a splendid and extraordinary work." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Edward Grant, author of God and Reason in the Middle Ages"A very lively read, indeed a real page turner... GrahamÃ¢â ¬â„¢s discussion of pressing ethical dilemmas displays a sureness of hand and a refreshing candor about his own struggles with the issues." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Susan Solomon, University of TorontoThe distinguished American historian of Russian and Soviet science Loren R. Graham recounts with warmth and wit his experiences during 45 years of traveling and researching in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, from 1960 to 2005. Present for many historic events during this period, Graham writes not as a political correspondent or an analyst, but as an ordinary American living through these years alongside Russian friends and critics. Graham befriended some of the leading scientists and politicians in Russia, but his most touching stories concern average Russians with whom he lived, worked, suffered, and exchanged views. Graham also writes of the ethical questions he confronted, such as the tension between independence of thought and political loyalty. Finally, he depicts the ways in which Russia has changedÃ¢â ¬â ¢visually, politically, and ideologicallyÃ¢â ¬â ¢during the last 15 years. These gripping, sometimes humorous, always deeply personal stories will engage and inform all readers with an interest in Russia during this tumultuous period of history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. On his first trip into the Soviet Union, in 1960, Graham had to walk through the

Finnish woods with his luggage after he was kicked off a train because his papers weren't in order. That's par for the course in this fascinating book recapping more than 40 years of visiting the Soviet Union and, later, post-Soviet Russia. Graham introduces a host of eccentric characters: the widow of a top Soviet official killed by Stalin; an American who fit into Soviet society because of his rumpled clothes and love of Russian dumplings; and a Georgian who cuts open a can of fish with his teeth as he and Graham share vodka. But the characters Graham encountered as a student and academic (he's a professor of the history of science at MIT) are only part of the story. These essays also depict the absurdities, both humorous and painful, of life in the Soviet Union. He recounts having to sneak back into the residence of the American ambassador in Moscow during one visit, how he was visited by the FBI and recruited by the KGB. Not only are the stories captivating but they are also well told: Graham's that rare academic who knows how to write for a popular audience. 13 b&w photos. (Apr.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Exciting, shocking, reflective, humane, strong-minded, compelling and touching, this book is essential reading for anyone who has been involved in the affairs of modern Russia or is thinking of taking them up." Ã¢â ¬â ¢ History

Tales, many interesting some less so, related by an American historian of science who was a frequent visitor to the USSR during the Cold War and who witnessed the start of a new Russia. I especially liked the material related to Dr. Graham's personal interactions with Bukarin's widow; Lysenko (the disgraced biologist); and George Soros. His reflections on the balance between the demands of politics and science are also worthwhile.Dr. Graham's writing skills, while adequate, are not as high, in my opinion, as asserted by some other reviewers of this memoir.

Wonderfully real account of life in the Soviet Union.

I enjoyed reading what it was like to be living in Russia as an American during the Cold War. Still can't figure out the value of a science historian, however.

Moscow StoriesBy Loren R. GrahamReviewBy Sol TetelbaumThere is nothing more exciting and enjoyable for a reader than a good book. I felt such enjoyment while reading Moscow Stories by Loren R. Graham. It is a truthful book. I emphasize the truthfulness because, as a former Soviet

citizen, I remember what kind of effort was necessary (especially for a foreigner) to get truthful information in the USSR. The Soviet rulers made lying a norm of Soviet life. Someone mentioned sarcastically that Soviets need "ear - eye" doctors, because their eyes don’t see what their ears hear.The book is a memoir written as separate stories about different people and events. These stories cover the period from 1960 till the present during which the author visited Moscow many times. I left the USSR in 1988, living there more than 50 years, and witnessed many events described by the author.One of the author’s first impressions of the country was the people’s fear of terror by authorities, of KGB tyranny. Some of his stories sounded very familiar: I experienced similar situations. The author describes many phenomena of Soviet reality, such as their electoral system - the phenomenal invention of the Soviet "totalitarian democracy" (election of one out of one), secret KGB informers, widespread alcoholism, heartlessness of the Soviet authorities, etc.Although the book is a memoir of a scientific historian, Graham makes it more interesting by including stories of his relationship with the FBI and CIA and several humorous episodes. I would like the author to tell us about his observations of other Soviet phenomena; some of them were extremely ugly, however a memoir isn’t a fiction, and one shouldn’t blame the author for lack of recollections.The book is entitled Moscow Stories because it is mainly about Moscow. The Soviet rulers made Moscow a special city, concentrating there the best of everything and everybody: scientists and engineers, theaters and actors, writers and journalists, food and goods supply, etc. And if one adds that many diplomats and foreigners lived in the city, all of this made Moscow like a Potyomkin’s village of the country.Russia is a complex and contradictory country, and reading the book, one has to be very careful judging the whole country by Moscow only. I believe the reader will enjoy the chapter An Ambiguous Funeral, where the author analyzes the political situation in Russia. Maybe his prognosis about it sounds too optimistic, but a truly democratic Russia is everybody’s wish.Russia’s history is a history of totalitarian regimes. It is scary even to think that Vladimir Putin could become a new edition of Russian dictators. Post-Soviet Russia is a crucial period for the country which is very interesting for the readers; unfortunately, in his book, the author tells too little about Putin’s rule.Summarizing my impressions, I recommend the book to all who are interested in Russia and politics, but I am sure that those who like to read smart, interesting books will read the book with great pleasure.Solomon (Sol) Tetelbaum

Now that the Soviet Union seems safely relegated to history, much of Graham’s book can be considered a nostalgic look at the Cold War. He regales us with anecdotes from 45 years to travelling to the Soviet Union, and then Russia after 1990. Some of these are amusing, like the

parlous lack of service in a Soviet hotel, like the famous Metropole of Moscow. Along with the shabby run down look of many building interiors.While there is some high politics, the book is best when it relates Graham's encounters with the average Russian. Giving some insight as to what it was like for foreigners to travel there, with all the handicaps imposed by a suspicious Soviet government. His observations were fairly benign. As a journalist and a historian, his work gave him little direct interactions with the rougher parts of the Soviet apparatus, which he thankfully makes clear in his narrative.

Historian Loren R. Graham was present during many important landmark events in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia between 1960 and 2005: his reflections on these events doesn't come from the usual reporter's viewpoint, but from that of an ordinary American living amongst the Russians. Individual chapters recalling the episodes and social turmoil also comment on the human aspects, on personalities and events in America, and on friendships amongst some of the leading scientists and politicians in Russia. Erudite and exceptionally well written, Moscow Stories is very highly recommended as an informed and informative addition to academic and community library Russian Studies and European History collections.

As someone who has travelled to Moscow many times between 1986 and 1996 I found Moscow Stories to be an accurate account of the history of the period. My own experiences back up, for me, what he has written. The author's observations about Russians and their culture demonstrate that he has spent quite a bit of time in Russia with Russians and that while there, he was a keen observer of what is going on around him. The book is very authentic and a must read for someone who has an interest in Russia both then and now and seeks a better understanding of Russia today.

A wonderful story teller who has seen Russia from the top and bottom for 45 years. He has talked with Gagarin(the first Russian astronaut), and to Lysenko in the early days, and toured Russia with Soros just lately. He has lived as a student and as a consultant-teacher.Since he is our best authority n the history of Soveit science it is a book for intellectuals as well.There is nothing else quite like it.It will be a standard reference for future historians of Russia.Marvin Thalenberg MD

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