

Cycles of Destiny: This Is My Journey

Sergie Waisman

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“Finally, a memoir worth reading!” That is what anyone fortunate enough to pick up *Cycles of Destiny: This Is My Journey—From the Land of the Dragon to the Promised Land* will shout, if they can pause long enough to spare a breath while hurrying to the next page.

Waisman, born Sergie Miroschnichenko, has a riveting story to tell. While not the most professional of writers, he does a wonderfully workmanlike job of relating the fascinating account of his family’s journey, a tale that spans several generations. Waisman begins the story in late seventeenth-century Russia and includes his grandfather’s heroics in the Russo-Japanese War as well as the exploits of his parents and grandparents during and following the Russian Revolution. The backstory sets the stage for the author’s own journey, which begins with his birth during World War II to a family of White Russian Christian émigrés living in northern China.

China, of course, is the “Land of the Dragon” mentioned in the book title. The author’s fascinating recollections from his childhood include his family’s escape from China, a nation torn by civil war and later ruled by Soviet and Chinese communists. With details that only a child would consider important, such as experiencing his first Coca-Cola (“it was heavenly”), the story rings true.

When his father is sent off to a Soviet gulag, Waisman’s mother flees with the children to the newly born state of Israel. Sergie is barely ten years old at the time. His coming-of-age story during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s is familiar, but the setting makes it stand apart.

As a young paratrooper, Sergie meets many of Israel’s most legendary figures, including David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Ariel Sharon, and fellow commando Yoni Netanyahu. After his military service, Sergie becomes disenchanted with Israel and follows his mother and her second husband, Isai Waisman, to Brooklyn. Once again the reader is treated to the view of a new world through an emigrant’s eyes.

Some readers may lose interest at this juncture, as the author recounts some forty years of life in New York, but fortunately Waisman has one more great adventure up his sleeve: his reunion with his father, in Russia, whom he has not seen in half a century. His father’s story, told with drama and heart, brings the family story full circle and completes the cycles of the title.

Liberalily illustrated with family photos, many from the tsarist era of Russia and the family’s days in China, *Cycles of Destiny* is anything but the typical memoir. There is so much to it that, with a little reworking, it could make for an excellent novel.

MARK G. MCLAUGHLIN (May 17, 2012)

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