

Free essay on moldova

Literature, Russian Literature



Eric Weiner decides to travel to Moldova as a remedy, apparently, for an overdose of happiness in his previous travels. After discarding some seemingly obvious choices like Iraq or Zimbabwe, he settles on Moldova because it is part of the former Soviet republic, “ sandwiched between Romania and the Ukraine, two significantly unhappy countries in their own right.” Eric is unsure at first what the possible source of unhappiness is in Moldova, but he believes that “ such a place will boost my mood since I’ll realize there are depths of misery to which I have not yet sunk.” His belief that Moldova’s unhappiness will cure his own proves to be about as reliable as the many superstitions Moldavians rely on in daily life.

He begins his quest for unhappiness in Moldova’s capital city, Chisinau. “ The city looks pleasant enough,” Eric observes as he rides in a taxi to his first destination. When he asks his guide, Natasha, why people in Moldova are unhappy, she responds, “ We have no money for the life.” Real, inescapable poverty has never made anyone happy, but this still seems like only scratching the surface of Moldova’s unhappiness.

As Eric goes out to meet Vitalie, a local blogger, he contemplates Moldova’s place since the collapse of the Soviet Union. He concludes that some of the unhappiness that resulted is a lack of culture or nationalism to fall back on for the Moldavians. Without an “ abiding faith or culture on which to rely,” it was hard for a country to feel pride in itself, never mind individual happiness. The language of Moldova is not very distinct from that of Romania. It seems like the people of Moldova are resigned to their unhappiness. Vitalie, the local blogger, tells Eric that “ there is the problem of Transnistria,” which is a breakaway republic, but it seems like Moldovans have more pride in

Transnistria than they have unhappiness from it.

Vitalie also believes that part of the problem in Moldova is a lack of trust.

People cannot trust that the food they buy is really what it is, their neighbors who may be corrupt, or even family members who may be conniving. Vitalie also goes back to the idea of lack of Moldavian culture, which Eric has contemplated before. Even freedom has not made the Moldavians happy, because under communism they had jobs and places to live, which they do not now. Eric concludes that cultural richness is necessary for freedom to create happiness, and Moldova does not possess that. Another day, he meets another Moldavian blogger, Marisha, and they visit the Museum of Nature and Ethnography. A huge mural reminds Eric again of the spiritual detachment of the Moldovans. Again the lack of cultural moorings is to blame for unhappiness.

The lack of trust which leads to unhappiness is demonstrated again through the Moldavian's failure to see the power of selfish altruism. For instance, no one else in his hostess's apartment building will contribute to fixing or replacing the broken water pump, because "no one is willing to contribute money to something that will benefit others as well as themselves." His hostess, Luba, blames Perestroika.

Eric decides to visit a town called Cahul, where there are some Peace Corps workers. They have a lot to say about the problems, for example the lack of courtesy of service workers, the nepotism, the lack of trust, paying professors for passing grades and the buying of degrees, fear of seeking help for problems, and using alcohol as an anesthetic. Upon his return to Chisinau, he meets Sandru, a Moldovan nationalist who explains, "

Moldovans are unhappy because they don't know who they are."

It appears there is a common theme throughout Eric's trip. People can get by with little money, too much money, and a variety of other problems, but not with Moldova's problem. "Moldova does not exist," he writes, "and existence is, in my book, a prerequisite for happiness. We need a solid identity— ethnic, national, linguistic, culinary, whatever—in order to feel good about ourselves." Without this, it seems there is resignation, no trust, no hope—and a lot of unhappiness.