

## ARMENIA:

### 'I Want to Go Home'

After World War II, Armenia began to reclaim its scattered sons and daughters. More than 100,000 Armenians, whose families had fled Turkish oppression 30 years before, returned to their home-

land, now reborn as one of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. Among the repatriates were 322 Armenian-Americans, some of them children whose parents, on a patriotic impulse, carried them off to a new life in the old country. The returnees were soon disillusioned. "When the boat docked," recalls Walter Kazarian, then 19 and fresh from the Bronx, "I took one look at the place and told my dad he had made the biggest mistake of his life." But there was no turning back. Merely to request an exit visa in those days of Stalinist terror meant a journey straight to Siberia—where some twenty homesick Armenian-Americans, in fact, ended up. After Stalin's death, about 120 of the émigrés were gradually allowed to leave, and dozens of others died of old age. But although the Kremlin is now allowing Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel, the 40 ex-

the America of their childhood. "I remember walking down Smith Street in my shirt sleeves during a summer shower," Derderian told *Newsweek's* Jay Axelbank. "Crazy, but that's what I remember most." And although he has long since grown inured to the constant surveillance inflicted on Soviet citizens, Derderian still remembers the sudden chill he felt upon his first encounter with life under a totalitarian regime. "That first day," he says, "another repatriate gave me the best advice I ever got: Keep your mouth shut and your eyes and ears open for a year. Then you'll know the score." I followed it, but it was pretty hard for a kid from the States used to shooting off his trap about everything. You couldn't even say the bread was sour."

The returnees also have had to adjust to the petty—and sometimes not so petty—larceny by which Soviet citizens seek

along the Turkish and Iranian borders has become a major producer of copper and computers, and it claims an industrial growth rate of 11 per cent a year, the highest of all the Soviet republics. Before 1920, there was no university in Armenia, but now, with 220 university students for each 10,000 inhabitants, Armenia leads all Soviet republics—and even Britain, France and West Germany—in the relative size of its student population.

Even so, the remaining American émigrés still feel uncomfortable. "I think the creation of an Armenian homeland is a great thing," says Kay Derderian. "We just don't like to have it forced down our throats." New York-born computer mechanic Souren Sam Kadekian, 38, puts it even more simply. "It's just that I don't fit in here," he explains. "Maybe if we holler long enough, they will let us go. Now the Jews are going—and to a place they never saw before. I was born in America. I want to go home."



Jay Axelbank—Newsweek

Manoogian and family: After 22 years, a yen for the Boston Bruins

Americans still living in Armenia cannot get permission to leave the land of their fathers.

"I have come to my wits' end," says Voskan Manoogian, 40, who still talks with a Boston accent 22 years after leaving his hometown. Every week, Manoogian goes to the Soviet passport agency to plead for exit visas for himself and his family, and every week he is turned away. Although by Armenian standards he lives well—he earns 160 rubles (\$176) a month as an English teacher, and pays only 12 rubles rent for a two-room apartment in the capital city of Yerevan—Manoogian misses American sports, particularly the Boston Bruins. And he treasures his shelf of well-thumbed American books. "See these paperbacks?" he says, "I'd be lost without them. It's my only recreation because there's nothing to do. The movies are propaganda or just corny."

Victor Derderian, 41, who was born in Providence, R.I., and his wife, Kay, a native of Watertown, Mass., also yearn for *Newsweek*, May 17, 1971

to render their existences tolerable. "We steal from each other," admits a native-born Armenian. "What can we do? We want to survive." Armenians habitually "steal lights" by turning off their electricity meters, and shortchanging in the stores has become a time-honored custom. "You don't even bother to count your change," says Mrs. Manoogian. "You know that the clerk is going to put 2, 3 or even 10 kopecks in her pocket. If you protest, she will never sell you oranges or even school notebooks when they are hard to get. Even the bus drivers shortchange you by 1 or 2 kopecks."

**Computers:** Despite such vicissitudes, the Armenian-Americans speak enthusiastically about the rejuvenation of their ancestral homeland. Armenian culture is thriving, and in many other respects the country has made great strides under Soviet rule. Yerevan was a dusty, rock-strewn village with 30,000 inhabitants when the Soviets took over Armenia 50 years ago; now it is an industrial city of 800,000. The mountainous republic