

(Download ebook) Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe

Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe

Anne Applebaum

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Anne Applebaum : Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Still relevant reading. By Narut Ujnat I have read through this author's other books she has written recently, about gulags and about the Iron Curtain, so I came across this book with interest. This book is actually almost 20 years old, but it is still relevant that is so typical of Eastern Europe history (where old tensions and divisions seem to be ever present). Here, Applebaum describes here trips through Eastern Europe in the shadow of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires. This is one of the few books I have read about the areas that isn't directly related to the Second World War, nor is strictly about politics. It is in fact, a historical journey through these areas with plenty of interesting travelogue and history mixed in. Since the area's divisions haven't really changed that much in the last decades since the fall of the Wall, so much of the discussion is still relevant and not dated. So the reading is still interesting. I learned quite a bit, and the book really dovetailed with my own travels and other reading. It is a fascinating read on an area that of course is so relevant to today and is still causing so many concerns. Besides that, I found it a good read. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. "Between East and West Is a Long Road" - blog review by Peter Korchnak, American Robotnik By Peter Korchnak Eighteen years ago Anne Applebaum traveled through the flat lands between Russia and Poland and documented her journey in "Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe." At first glance, it was a different time: Communist governments had toppled a few years before and the chaos of transition to democracy pervaded all life. But, Applebaum presages

what Anne Porter documented in last year's "The Ghosts of Europe": history casts a long shadow across time. Shifting borders, clashing empires, and old conflicts turn making sense of the borderlands into a daunting challenge: "Travel here demands a forensic passion, not merely a love of art or architecture or natural beauty; there are many layers of civilization in the borderlands, and they do not lie neatly on top of one another. A ruined medieval church sits on the site of a pagan temple, not far from a mass grave surrounded by a modern town. There is a castle on the hill and a Catholic church at its foot and an Orthodox church beside a ruined synagogue. A traveler can meet a man born in Poland, brought up in the Soviet Union, who now lives in Belarus--and he has never left his village. To sift through the layers, one needs to practice a kind of visual and aural archaeology, to imagine what the town looked like before the Lenin statue was placed in the square, before the church was converted into a factory and the main street renamed. In a conversation, one must listen to the overtones, guess what the speaker might have said fifty years ago on the same subject, understand that his nationality might then have been different--know, even, that he might have used another language." Applebaum performs the task admirably, confirming that the version of her I know from Slate and other venues was already fully formed back then. The personal encounters and observations take place on the background of impressive historical research, as Applebaum backs every assertion with rich detail. As a good journalist, Applebaum remains consistently respectful of the people she meets. Only once does she cross the line and judges, but to pity an ignorant anti-Semite can be forgiven (Applebaum is Jewish). As she travels from the Russian Kaliningrad to Lithuania to Belarus and down to Odessa, Ukraine, she first organizes her journey by the peoples inhabiting the lands she crosses, then by cities, towns, and villages she passes through. Thus in Part One she visits Germans, in Part Two Poles and Lithuanians, and finally in Part Three Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. But even as she describes well a municipality in each chapter, nations and nationalism matter more than the place and characteristics of each place matter only inasmuch as they relate to the shifting national borders. Granted, on the backdrop of nationalisms bubbling up after the fall of Communism, the impulse to see the region through the national lens seems understandable. Too, in 1994 the concept of place identity wasn't a force it is today. But writing so little about the impact of villages and cities themselves, as places, on the people Applebaum meets struck me as a missed opportunity. "Between East and West" was the rare book I read word for word (I would have even read the index, had there been one). But I almost abandoned it when, after leaving Mukachevo and passing, roughly south-eastbound, through Khust, Applebaum miraculously finds herself near Mikov, Andy Warhol's parents' village in Eastern Slovakia which is some 230 kilometers (144 miles) to the northwest. The episode is only a page of text, but the magnitude of the error left a bitter aftertaste of a misplaced gimmick. Save for the one instance of teleportation, "Between East and West" is the kind of book I want (and am planning) to write: combination travelogue, historic geography, and literary reportage focusing on Central/Eastern Europe. Rather than being dated, it reveals a striking portrait of a turbulent time in the region. I of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great book, combination of travelogue, geography lesson and history of this very troubled region. Applebaum is superb historian writing on topics such as the Iron Curtain, the Holocaust and the Fall of Communism. Highly recommended

Examines the past and present of the Eastern European borderlands, now emerging from Soviet rule, describing the rich variety of cultures, religions, and national aspirations of the area's inhabitants as they attempt to construct a future based on ancient ancestral legacies.

From Publishers Weekly Traveling the uncertain land between Eastern and Western Europe, Applebaum recounts her three-month journey and the people she meets, typified by a man who was born in Poland, raised in the Soviet Union and now living in Belarus--yet he has never left his village. The territorial borders of many towns in Eastern Europe have been redrawn so often over the centuries that such villages are called *kresy*, meaning they belong to no one in particular. The American-born Applebaum, who is the foreign editor of the *London Spectator* and has residences in Poland and England, shows herself as a journalist of sturdy competence, smart and shrewd. She speaks Polish and Russian and is well read in Eastern European history. Applebaum travels from *kresy* to *kresy* in dilapidated private autos she hires, although on occasion she must walk; the few hotels are seedy and homes where she is sometimes invited to sleep aren't markedly more comfortable. But she's not deterred; Applebaum's receptiveness encourages borderlanders to tell her the myriad of ways that political partitioning has subjugated their personal lives, cultural traditions and languages. She in turn explains to us the nationalism motivating these newly independent people as they try to redefine their true heritages. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal The borderlands west of Russia, in east central Europe, have endured frequent changes of hegemony. Citizens of one village may think of themselves as Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, or Moldovan regardless of where the current borders are drawn, as Applebaum discovered during her travels and interviews. An American journalist now living in London, she spent the years 1988-1991 as a free-lancer in Poland and revisited the area from which her great-grandparents had emigrated. The narrative proceeds from Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea to Odessa on the Black Sea, stopping in large cities and small towns; it combines a bit of history from the Middle Ages with tales of contemporary life without the Soviet Union to portray an eclectic mixture of ethnic identity. The vivid descriptions of another way of

life would enhance popular collections. Marcia L. Sprules, Council on Foreign Relations Lib., New York Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA journey through middle Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, of which George Orwell would have been proud, if he had extended his own travels from the Road to Wigan Pier to Minsk. This is not a land flowing with milk and honey. The region and its peoples have been fought over, uprooted, persecuted, and killed for a thousand years. Just in this century, the Borderlands have survived the collapse of three empires, the division of the spoils after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, the Second World War, the Holocaust, Stalin's despotism, and the fall of the Soviet Union. As Applebaum, foreign editor for the London Spectator, aptly comments, "To sift through the layers, one needs to practice a kind of visual and aural archeology." She does so with sensitive skill, noting how the cobblestones have disappeared beneath cracked concrete, how medieval foundations have vanished behind "spectacular monotony," and how churches and shops have given way to numbered apartment blocks. She records the rival nationalisms- Lithuanians hating Poles, Poles hating Lithuanians, everyone hating the Russians. She sees the miles of rusting Soviet naval ships in Kaliningrad, the pit behind the courthouse in Woroniaki in the Ukraine where the KGB dumped the bodies of those they had executed, and records the changes that have taken place as a Ukrainian professor of atheism renames himself professor of religion but delivers the same lectures. She ends her visit in Odessa, with its elegant houses, the only upbeat part of the trip. Otherwise, one is inclined to agree with the Russian who observes sourly that there is no difference between a peasant on the Volga and a man living in the African jungle except that the African has sunlight, fresh air, clean water, and no ice in the winter. The decor may be Soviet drab and mildew, but the book is intelligent, evocative, filled with vivid characterization and an understanding of the history of the area. -- Copyright 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.