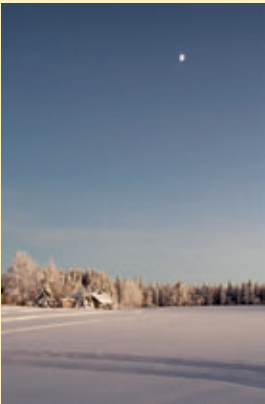


editorial

source: hidden europe 29 (Nov / Dec 2009)
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Colin Thubron is a British travel writer whom we much admire. Surely one of the finest of his generation. Be it in his accounts of journeys through Siberia or central Asia, Thubron nicely catches the frisson of a life alone on the road. So it was particularly pleasing to see Colin Thubron quoted in *The Guardian* recently with a few thoughts on the enduring value of good travel writing. Thubron remarked that “great swaths of the world are hardly visited and remain much misunderstood.”

Thubron had Iran in mind, but how much do most of us really know or understand about life in some of Europe’s remoter regions? When did anywhere in Albania or Moldova beyond the principal cities last feature in the television news? And what do we know of Bosnia and Herzegovina beyond Sarajevo and Mostar? The truth is that huge areas of our home continent lie beyond our personal radar. Could you place the Komi Republic, Nenetsia or the Republic of Adygea on the political map of contemporary Europe? We are not sure we would get all three absolutely right.

In that *Guardian* piece, Colin Thubron puts in a fine pitch for our craft: “A good travel writer can give you the warp and weft of everyday life, the generalities of people’s existence that are rarely reflected in journalism, and hardly touched upon by any other discipline. Despite the internet and the revolution in communications, there is still no substitute.”

It is a viewpoint with which we utterly agree. Travel writing is about far more than reporting on tourist resorts. Catching the warp and the weft of everyday life is a challenge, but an important one. Thubron questions whether it was merely coincidence that the last US administration, which brought such havoc to world affairs, was run by men who by and large had not travelled. We know from our own work how travel breeds understanding and tolerance. But, for those of us more inclined to stay at home, reading quality travel writing surely comes a close second in advancing our understanding of foreign communities and what makes them tick. That, we hope, is part of the appeal of *hidden europe*. We hope you enjoy our latest issue which will escort you from Iceland to Lapland, from Bohemia to Brandenburg.

Nicky Gardner & Susanne Kries
Editors

Inveraray, Scotland
October 2009

front cover: Seyðisfjörður, Iceland

top left: Finnish-Russian border area (photo © Oleg Kozlov)

middle left: Horšovský Týn, Czech Republic

bottom left: Sospel, France

above right: new main railway station in Berlin, Germany

copy deadline for this issue was 9 October 2009

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