

SIBERIA. Journeys into a Country of Women

(This book is available in French only. Original title : SIBERIE, Un voyage au pays des femmes, Actes Sud, 2006)

In the winter of 2004 and the spring of 2005, Anne Brunswic made two trips to Siberia, travelling throughout this continent-sized region that bears the stamp of an exciting yet tragic past and faces political chaos and economic depression.

Passing from the White Sea to the Pacific, from Yakutia to Birobidjan, through the gold mines of the Kolyma and the port of Vladivostok, Anne Brunswic criss-crossed barren and beautiful landscapes, often in a state of desolation. In extreme weather conditions, European immigrants live alongside indigenous Siberians, Orthodox Christians side-by-side with animists, descendants of the Gulag founders next to the families of their victims.

Anne's aim was to meet with women of every condition, singers and poets, journalists and cooks, academics and museum curators. Natalia, Tamara, Liudmila, Irina talked freely about their life experiences, expressing private, political and religious concerns, recalling the tragedies that struck their families, their tribulations, their daily struggle to survive, and their girlish dreams.

Her remarkable journey to the far ends of Siberia is told through compelling observations of everyday life at the frontiers of the wild east. She gleans haunting insights into how Russians succeed again and again in giving meaning to their cruel historical experience and the hopes they have for the future. Despite the harshness and uncertainty of their lives, most insist on their allegiance to the land of Siberia, to the values of frontier-life and camaraderie, and their faith that sooner or later their battered country will make a new start. For these women, separated by thousands of miles, Anne Brunswic becomes an singular spokesperson.