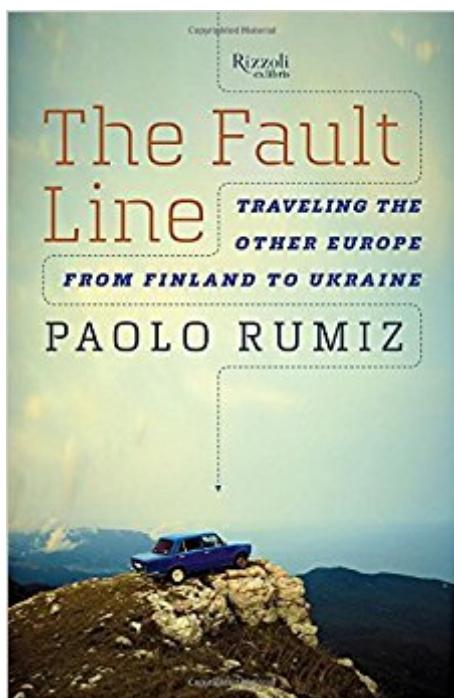


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# The Fault Line: Traveling The Other Europe, From Finland To Ukraine



## Synopsis

An award-winning writer travels the eastern front of Europe, where the push/pull between old empires and new possibilities has never been more evident. Paolo Rumiz traces the path that has twice cut Europe in two—first by the Iron Curtain and then by the artificial scaffolding of the EU—moving through vibrant cities and abandoned villages, some places still gloomy under the ghost of these imposing borders, some that have sought to erase all memory of it and jump with both feet into the West (if only the West would have them). In *The Fault Line*, he is a sublime and lively guide through these unfamiliar landscapes, piecing together an atlas that has been erased by modern states, delighting in the discovery of communities that were once engulfed by geopolitics then all but forgotten, until now. The farther south he goes, the more he feels he is traveling not along some abandoned Eastern frontier, but right in the middle of things: Mitteleuropa wasn't to be found in Viennese cafés but much farther east, beyond even Budapest and Warsaw. As in Ukraine, these remain places in flux, where the political and cultural values of the East and West have stared each other down for centuries. Rumiz gives a human face not just to what the Cold War left behind but to the ancient ties of empire and ethnicity that are still at the root of modern politics in flash-point areas such as this.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In his first book translated into English, *La Repubblica* correspondent Rumiz vents his anger at the European Union's "rhetoric of globalization," which homogenizes ethnic distinctions and threatens to obliterate traditional communities. His nostalgic, engaging search for the heart of

European identity takes him from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, through present-day Finland, Latvia, Ukraine and Poland. In these regions, the author finds depopulated villages, survivors of mass deportations and exterminations that continued long after World War II. Exploring the border between Russia and the European Union, Rumiz realized that he was traveling "a seismic fault that's only apparently dormant" because Russia, under Putin, is becoming a renewed threat. A richly detailed journey into Europe's dark past and vulnerable present. *Kirkus Reviews* "In this hypnotic travelogue, Italian journalist Rumiz weaves a poetic narrative about his 2008 journey along the length of the former Iron Curtain. There is an unlikely poetic beauty to his flowery, indulgent prose. He lovingly describes his escapades and experiences, conjuring up places few tourists ever visit, exposing the dichotomy between the modernity of the EU and the time-lost ways of the old world, and illuminating a much-overlooked region of the world in a thoroughly fascinating manner. Though he is given to purple prose and overly colorful descriptions, there is no denying the allure and appeal of his European odyssey." *Publishers Weekly* "A glimpse of a hard journey through hard times, highly recommended for those interested in European history and little-known corners of travel." *Library Journal* "It's 'goodbye Iron Curtain; hello, EU scaffolding,' as Rumiz learns in a journey through new post-Soviet Europe." *National Geographic Traveler* "Idiosyncratic, lushly observed and aglow with philosophical asides, this questing travelogue sheds light on regions you've never heard of, where traditions endure from other ages. . . Rumiz's paean to 'peripheral places' shows his readers that dystopian modernity isn't the only story of the present-day eastern borderlands: A fairy tale lurks between the lines, and those who have enough intuition and courage (and perhaps a Russian translator) can discover it for themselves, if they borrow his map." *New York Times Book Review*

Paolo Rumiz has been a correspondent for Italy's *La Repubblica* since 1986, focusing on the Balkans and Eastern Europe. He was a frontline correspondent during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, and Afghanistan, and has won many prizes for his journalism and nonfiction.

Borderlands and frontiers have long fascinated me. Paolo Rumiz, long time Italian journalist and world traveler, has journeyed the traditional borderlands of Europe made new by the European Union; what Rumiz calls "fortress Europe." Rumiz and his traveling companion prefer their Europe wild and raw which is why they commit to traveling the non-EU side of the vertical border from

Murmansk Russia to Istanbul by train and bus for most of their journey. Through a portion of Europe which is little written about we meet gregarious grandmothers, gangsters, surly youth and back-to-the-land authors who share their stories about life and history. Rumiz and his companion have an open attitude to the people and places they experience which is very refreshing. They also understand the deep historical and cultural nuances of lands where there is a deep void resulting from the forced deportations, relocations and exterminations of peoples over the last century. About the market square in Chernivtsi Ukraine, the former Czernowitz, center of Jewish culture and learning, Rumiz has to say: "All around are Cossack butchers with cascading mustaches, buxom Moldovian farm women, vociferous Romanians selling strings of braided onions, bony-faced Carpathian natives with baskets of mountain herbs and greens. The only missing player in this chaotic scene is the Hassidic Jew with his wide-brimmed black hat, black long coat, and curls down to his shoulders." He understands what has been lost. And the rich strangeness that yet remains.

This is one exquisite book. For those who feel solace by walking the earth, expanded by recapturing history, and nourished by tales of those who connect with a hallowed spirit, this will please you. Did I leave out humor? The charm in his insights made me smile and read aloud to others. I grew up in the US and have lived half my life in Asia, but my heart yens to understand the Slavic Mittel Europa of my ancestry and to visit Karelia, in particular. I think that his translator had a lot of fun with his job and when I read it a second time it will be with a dictionary. It's not often that I read a book with English words I've never seen but somehow that was just right when reading insights so rare as these. Please give your English language readers more, Paolo.

This remarkable journey captures something that we all dream about. Along with his Russian translator Monica, the writer takes us from the far northern reaches of the Baltic to Istanbul. The writer's willingness to participate in difficult travel, being with the people of the earth... Jewish, orthodox Christian, Russian and Polish, Latvian and Estonian, to name a few, makes our own, very safe and carefully planned journeys seem unimaginative. Courageous, Vividly descriptive, and heartwarming because of the people, make this a must read for all serious travelers... this is my second time through this remarkable book whenever I am unable to sleep at night, I open this book on my iPad with the Kindle app and I read a chapter or 2... Pablo does what all great travel writers do Bring us to that space I'm help us understand what it's like to be part of the local culture. I'm continuing to look for some of the photo memories that Monica recorded while they were traveling, but nevertheless his description of these wonderful Russian Jewish, Russian, Latvian and northern

european people and places is remarkable...forgive typos

Challenging and enjoyable read! Enjoyable and challenging because parts the adventure will resonate with a well traveled reader and sidetrack the reader into their own memories of people and place. Challenging and enjoyable descriptions of people and places. As I journeyed with the writer, there was a push/pull between things familiar and things unfamiliar, a push/pull between wanting to continue with the book and stopping to do some research for deeper understanding. The pull to stay with the writer won out. It seems fitting that the book left me wanting to see Monika's photos, the sketches in the author's notebook, and the maps. I will read it again.....and stop to do some research along the way.

Paolo Rumiz provides an alternative and deeply subjective description of the edges of modern Europe, from which, as he demonstrates, a resolute traveler can still escape. He traces a path from North to south rather than from east to west, and the results of this change of direction are remarkable. I do wish he had added more about the eastern termination of his journey, but his courage is unquestionable and leads me to consider following in his dancing footsteps. Michael Murphy

While a little difficult to follow at times this is a really interesting book and in view of later events a very insightful analysis. The e version would definitely have benefitted from some decent maps. Some of the authors more esoteric ramblings were also of limited interest to me but the journey was well told and compelling

Very interesting chronology of his trip with a lot of historical information as well as interaction with people of countries and areas he visited.

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to travel to Middle Europe. It gave me the travel itch for sure.

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