



Escape Via Siberia: A Jewish Child's Odyssey of Survival

Dorit Bader Whiteman

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Whiteman presents a compelling story of survival. Through the story of one boy -- Elliott 'Lonek' Jaroslawicz -- she conveys the tale of the dramatic escape of thousands of Polish Jews from the encroaching Nazi menace. With the crack of a Nazi whip on his father's head, the world that Lonek knows is gone forever. Lonek and his family are forced to join the tide of refugees fleeing eastward. In the course of their flight they are imprisoned in a Siberian labour camp. A short-lived treaty between the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Soviet Government allows for the miraculous release of approximately one hundred thousand Polish citizens, including Lonek's family. They make their way to Tashkent, only to find that life there is harsh--hunger and sickness abound. When his father falls ill, Lonek's mother is driven to despair and leaves her ten-year-old son on the doorstep of an orphanage. Lonek is then swept up in another miraculous rescue. He joins the more than 900 Jewish children known as the "Teheran Children," who depart on the only kindertransport that emanates from Russia. After an arduous journey, the children are stranded in Iran due to the vagaries of war and failed diplomacy. Their plight is championed by Henrietta Szold while the leadership of Hadassah relentlessly pressures the American and British governments to assure the children's safe passage. Finally, eight months after they leave Tashkent and after a route that takes them through India and Egypt, Lonek and the other children safely reach Palestine. In ESCAPE VIA SIBERIA, Whiteman has crafted an elegy to the human spirit while emphasizing the tremendous international forces which affected the Polish Jewish escapees' lives and their persistent, heroic struggle in the face of tremendous odds.

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