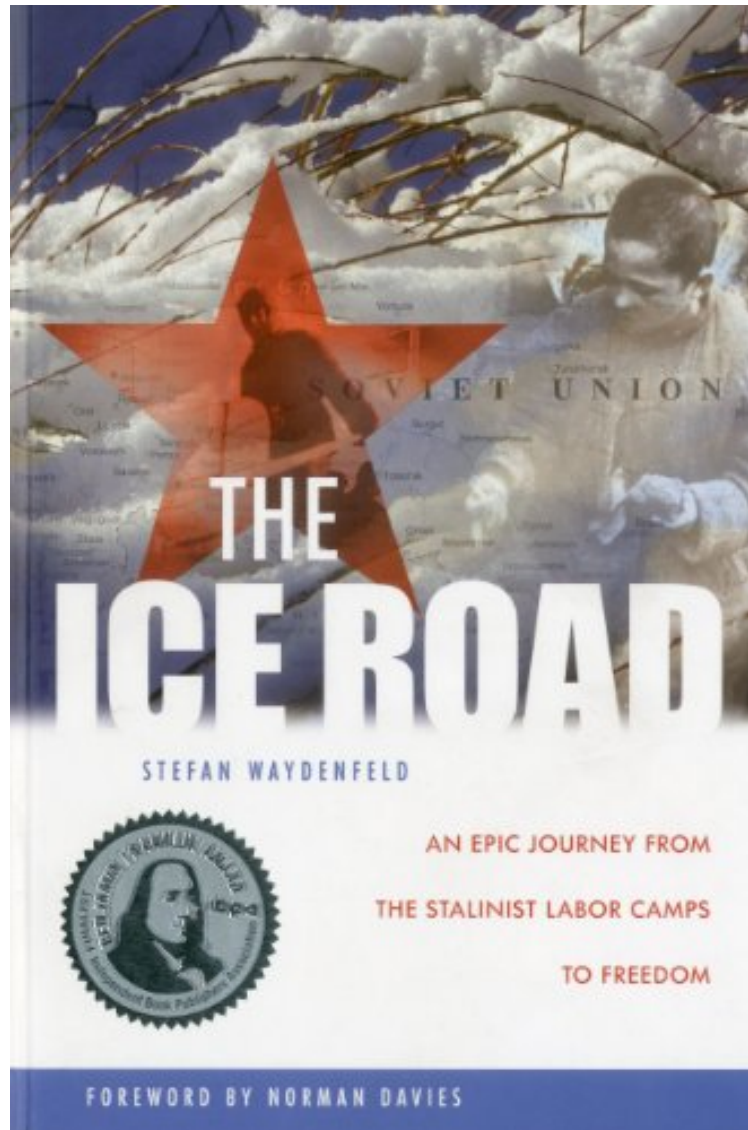


The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom

Stefan Waydenfeld

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Stefan Waydenfeld : The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. An Historic Account of a Family's Survival During WWII By I. Auerbach "The Ice Road" is an historical account of the exploits of a Polish family during World War II, who among

thousands of others on the Russian side of the Polish-Russian border, following the German invasion of Poland, were rounded-up in the middle of the night and sent deep into Siberia. There, they found themselves dropped-off in a primitive lumber camp in a forest clearing on the bank of the Uftyuga River called, Kvasha. At their arrival they were told, "here you shall live". It was a life-sentence to a Soviet slave labor camp from which no one had ever returned. Reading "The Ice Road" was as anticipatory as reading a good novel. The book, however, is not a novel at all, but rather a documentary. Most history is dry, telling the reader what happened to thousands of people, where it happened, why and when. The reader knows what happened to everybody, but doesn't know what happened to anybody. He gets a full view of the forest, but no one tree is significant. This account is a powerful zoom into the forest to look closely at one family. The reader knows specifically what happened to them, their feelings at the time, their relationships to each other, to others and others relationships to them. The reader is able to actually know them. This is made possible by Stefan Waydenfeld's descriptively detailed accounts of events within their contexts. The book is appropriately written in the first person. Dr. Waydenfeld is a witness. Here is his captivating testimony.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great read! By Gigi This is such an important part of history so why has it not been taught. Thank you for sharing your incredible story.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Ice Road By Wasyl Miller Waydenfeld provides a stark picture of what it would be like to go from leading a normal life in a prosperous country, and then be subjected to war, bombing and destruction. Living just outside of Warsaw in September 1939, the author and his family were spared some of the initial attacks that focused on Warsaw. His father, a medical officer was called up into the army, and Stefan soon left home to search for his father. Then Poland was attacked from the east by the Russians and the Poles who were fleeing the Nazis were caught up in the Bolshevik net. The family was re-united in eastern Poland and lived for a few months as refugees. The Soviets told the Poles that they would send them back to their homes, and they were packed into closed box cars. When they were re-opened over a week later, they found themselves in the far north in Siberian Russia. The book continues with the tale of their life working in the northern forests and on the Ice Road, the eventual German attack on Russia, being released from their northern captivity, and having to find their way on their own, south through Russia and eventually to Persia. There are many adventures along with tragic tales and events. It makes for compelling reading.

In a forgotten chapter of history, 1.5 million Polish civilians? arbitrarily arrested by Stalin as enemies of the people following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939? were deported to slave labor camps throughout the most inhospitable forests and steppes of the Soviet Union. The Ice Road is the gripping story of young Stefan Waydenfeld and his family, deported by cattle car in 1940 to the frozen wastes of the Russian arctic north.

By Tricia Ambrose While browsing the stacks of new nonfiction at Euclid Library last week, I happened upon *The Ice Road* by Stefan Waydenfeld. Subtitled *An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom*, it fit right into my desire to expand my knowledge of past conflicts. Plus, the title is a grabber, isn't it? Waydenfeld's account of his Polish family's nomadic years during World War II is a real eye-opener. I cannot imagine packing everything I own into suitcases at gunpoint, forced to leave my home, sent off to an unknown future. And the Waydenfelds did it more than once! Waydenfeld doesn't mince words and his book is surprisingly unsentimental. There is no woe-is-me - and he sure had reason! - at all. His family went from middle class existence (his father was a doctor; his mother a bacteriologist) to working the most brutal of jobs in the most brutal of conditions in a Siberian labor camp. Reading his account of logging in Siberia and in particular of the night work on the ice road, I vow to never complain about the cold again. In such circumstances, it'd be easy to lose hope. Yet he keeps focused on the future and a return to his education. Among the items Waydenfeld lugged from place to place were school books. How many of us can say we would have done the same? I'm not sure I would have had the fortitude to endure half of what he did, let alone with so little complaint and hatred for those who essentially robbed him of so much. --The News-Herald, Ohio, June 14, 2010

By Michael J. Bonafield *The Ice Road: An Epic Journey From the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom* is an extraordinary memoir. On one level, it is the story of a 14-year-old Polish lad from a comfortable middle-class family whose idyllic life is suddenly shattered by the German invasion in 1939. Beyond that, however, it is testament to the resiliency of the human spirit in the midst of a nation's death throes. When author Stefan Waydenfeld's father, a physician, is called up by the army, his mother, a bacteriologist, is left to hold the little family together. With German bombs raining everywhere, Stefan sets out to find his dad. He heads east -- into the maw of the advancing Red Army, which Stalin, in alliance with Hitler, has unleashed on Poland. Miraculously, the family is reunited, but as detainees in the Soviet zone, they are first, "undesirables," then "enemies of the people" awaiting the dreaded knock on the door. When it comes, they are packed into cattle cars and shipped West, or so they are told, to the Nazi zone. But Stefan realizes that "the sun is on the wrong side" of the train, and that the family actually is heading east -- to Siberia. Dumped into a logging camp, where the order "He who does not work does not eat" is rigorously enforced, the family barely keeps life and limb together in subzero temperatures. In a herculean effort, they build a log raft and escape, traveling by any means, mostly foot, to join fellow Poles in Soviet Central Asia. There, the Allies attempted to raise an army to fight the Germans from among displaced Poles, many in Stalin's slave-labor camps. Like all stories of

exceptional heroism and grit, this one is textured with fascinating personalities and subplots. Waydenfeld relates events with equanimity and grace, content to let the story speak for itself. It is a facet of World War II that has largely gone unnoticed in the West -- until now. --Minneapolis Star Tribune, May 22, 2010 By Edwin Burgess It seems that mankind's second favorite occupation is war--whether engaging in it or writing about it. These titles show us that while much about war's roots, conditions, and results remains the same over the years, memoirists, analysts, journalists, and historians can reveal the many individual stories of change along the way. Memoir Waydenfeld, Stefan. *The Ice Road: An Epic Journey from the Stalinist Labor Camps to Freedom*. Aquila Polonica 2010. c.405p. illus. maps. The author was 14 when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland between them. Many Poles, including Waydenfeld's family, were swiftly deported to Siberian labor camps. Only about half survived. Released in 1941, Waydenfeld and his parents endured a desperate journey across a hostile country and eventually reached the West. A remarkable tale. --Library Journal, April 1, 2010 By Irene Tomaszewski Carl Jung once said that man will get used to anything, if only he reaches an appropriate degree of submission. Stefan Waydenfeld's memoir, *The Ice Road*, is a gripping story about a family suddenly thrust into a country where a population had been cowed to such a degree of submission that no matter what their state dictated, their response was to "get used to it." With this dystopia as a background, the book reads like a novel, even an adventure, with a plot that includes war, arrests, families lost and found, and constant danger. The horror of it, however, is that the story is not fiction, and the country is real. The Waydenfelds were deported along with thousands of other Poles to the Gulag during the Red Army's occupation of Poland during the Second World War. *The Ice Road* is the story of their two harrowing years in the Soviet Union, first in one of the Gulag's slave labor camps, and then their long and desperate flight to freedom. Prior to the outbreak of WWII, the Waydenfelds, an affluent family of secular Jewish background, lived in the town of Otwock, Poland, a health resort where the author's father was a well-known specialist in lung disease, his mother a bacteriologist. They lived a comfortable, culturally rich life. In 1939, there was much talk of war but most people preferred to think it would remain just talk or, at worst, the war would not last long. But war did come, and Poland, situated between the Soviet Union and Germany, was the crucible of combat. For almost two years the two totalitarian regimes collaborated in their destruction of Poland; then Hitler's forces turned against the Soviet Union in a murderous campaign across eastern Poland and into Russia until, their fortunes reversed, the Red Army once again stormed into devastated Poland to defeat the Germans, and to install its own regime. Caught in this vortex of horror, the Waydenfelds fled from the Germans only to discover the Soviet terror. Attempting to return to the German side, they were caught in a trap when the train they thought was to take them to Warsaw instead headed east. The Waydenfelds were taken to a labour camp where enslavement was "re-education." There, men and women, young and old, were expected to fell trees, and if they did not, they would not eat. Winter came, the work continued, whether or not the prisoners were clothed for it. Waydenfeld's described people encrusted with an armor of ice that actually sheltered their bodies from wind and kept their bodies dry. Newspapers wrapped around feet, held together by rags, served as boots. And the work went on. When Hitler attacked the USSR, Polish prisoners suddenly found themselves free. Given that only those who worked were entitled to food, freedom came with a price and, given the isolation of the camps, leaving was not a simple matter. The logging camps were located deep in the forest but on rivers so, with fantastic ingenuity, the liberated Polish prisoners constructed rafts to take them out of the wilderness. Later, bartering, trading, bribing somehow enabled them to board trains, barges and trucks as they traveled thousands of kilometers across the immense country until, at last, they joined up with the newly formed Polish army that was being evacuated to the Middle East. The family survived, though photographs of Waydenfeld's father, one taken in 1939 and the other in 1941, reveal the ravages of hard labor on his health. He would not live long after the war. His mother frequently lapsed into severe depression, and the teenage Stefan at times wondered whether his hopes for an education and a career in medicine would forever remain unfulfilled. At the start of the war, Waydenfeld, then only fourteen, wanted to enlist in the Polish army in defense of his country. In 1942, at age 17, he joined the Polish II Corps and went on to fight at Monte Cassino. Despite that, he and the rest of the Polish soldiers who fought with the allies had no free country to return to. Demobilized in England, he completed his education and went on to become a family physician. Waydenfeld wrote his book because he felt compelled to address an injustice, a double injustice: first, the suffering and loss of life brought upon the Polish nation by the Soviet Union, and second, the indifference to, and even conscious suppression of that history by Poland's allies. *The Ice Road* is an important personal testament and the work of a truly gifted writer. --The Cosmopolitan, Spring 2010 From the Inside Flap "The sun is on the wrong side!" June 1940: Roused out of bed in the middle of the night, given thirty minutes to dress and pack, crammed and locked into a cattle car with dozens of other people, 14-year-old Stefan Waydenfeld and his parents were told by Soviet militia that they were being repatriated from Soviet-occupied eastern Poland to Nazi German-occupied Warsaw--until the next morning on the rails, when young Waydenfeld realized that the sunrise was on the wrong side of the train. They were heading east, deep into the Soviet Union, not west toward Warsaw. Brilliantly told through the eye of a young schoolboy, *The Ice Road* is a fluid, engaging tale of pluck, incredible resourcefulness, and even humor, as Waydenfeld and his parents survive in the hostile Siberian labor camp and eventually escape on a raft, then travel by rail and foot to Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Persia to join the Second Polish Corps, leaving Stalin's paradise behind. Courage and humanity make

this real life story an inspiring read, as well as a rare window into a long-buried aspect of history. From the Back Cover "He who does not work, does not eat." These grim words greeted 14-year-old Stefan Waydenfeld and his parents at the end of their forced journey by cattle car from their home in Poland to a Stalinist labor camp in the desolate Siberian forests. The Ice Road is Stefan Waydenfeld's spellbinding tale of survival in the frozen arctic forests and his long journey to freedom. This enthralling story of great scope and humanity sheds light on a little known aspect of World War II, in which 1.5 million Polish civilians were arbitrarily arrested by Stalin as "enemies of the people" following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939. A Selection of the HISTORY BOOK CLUB and the MILITARY BOOK CLUB "It is truly an extraordinary book." -- Ann Applebaum, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Gulag "A thrilling adventure, all the more remarkable for being true." -- Norman Davies, leading historian and author "Within the first paragraphs of The Ice Road I knew I would be captivated...surprisingly fresh, detailed and intimate." -- The Sunday Times, London "People don't have stories like his to tell any more." -- Literary