

# Historical Novels Review

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## MAPS AND SHADOWS

Krycia Jopek, Aquila Polonica, 2010, \$14.95, pb, 151pp, 9781607720089

In early 1940, Russia invaded and occupied eastern Poland. One and a half million Polish citizens, many of them veterans of the previous war, were declared enemies of Russia and torn from their homes. Deported first to forced labor camps in Siberia, they were eventually offered amnesty if they agreed to fight for the Russian Army. As the men fought, the women struggled to keep the rest of the family together, despite starvation, disease,

and further displacement. With no home — or citizenship — left in Poland, they sought safe haven across the globe.

Reading at times like a wartime memoir, *Maps and Shadows* follows one family as they are sent first to Siberia and then to Uzbekistan, Iran, Palestine, Africa, England and finally the United States, in an effort to remake their home. Separated for much of the war, they each have their part to tell in the story: the father, Andrezej, ashamed of not being able to protect his family and first in line to volunteer for the Army; thirteen-year-old Henryk, who joins the Young Soldiers' Battalion to get extra rations for his mother; Helcia, who hides a dictionary under her dress when they are taken, so that she'll never forget how to say "hope" in Polish; and Zofia, the mother doing her best to hold everything together.

Peppered with poetry from the margins of Helcia's dictionary, this haunting book tells of a tragic and little-known chapter of history. It's a slim volume, with more emphasis on characters than story, but well-researched. Heavily based on her own family's experience, Jopek's book is recommended to those who like their historical fiction autobiographical and real.

*Jessica Brockmole*