

**Wikipedia website:** *Defiance* is a Golden Globe-nominated 2008 war film directed by Edward Zwick. Set in the eastern regions of German Nazi-occupied Poland (now western Belarus) during World War II, the film is an adaptation of Nechama Tec's *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans*, which is based on the true story of the Bielski partisans. Tec's book told how Polish Jews came together for common protection and to oppose the German occupation of their homeland.

*Defiance* is about four brothers from Poland who escaped the Nazi persecution and fought back to rescue fellow Jews. Production began in early September 2007. The film had a limited release in the United States on December 31, 2008,<sup>[1]</sup> and went on full release in January 2009.

## The mixed record of the Bielski Partisans:

### The Untold Story

Polish Educational Foundation in North America – January 2009

### Part 3 of 3

## The Home Army and the treatment of marauders

Despite the massive extent of pilfering, no credible evidence has ever been presented that any member of the Bielski group was killed by the Home Army, or by any Pole for that matter. At various times, prior to December 1943, the Soviet and Polish partisan leaders had agreed on a territorial demarcation for gathering provisions which the Soviet side usually breached. Sometimes Polish partisans pursued intruders and chased them away. Occasionally, they administered a thrashing to recidivists caught robbing in areas under the control of Polish partisans. However, such actions were infrequent because marauders generally operated at night and with impunity. Sulia Rubin, a member of Bielski's group, acknowledged that her husband Boris and his older brother engaged in forays for provisions on a regular basis.

*Boris' brother [Izaak or Itsek Rubizhevski] and a few others were caught in some partisan village area, their guns were taken away and held by the Poles and their commander Milashevski [Milaszewski]. Our leader called for me and another fellow who spoke Polish well, and asked us to go to the Polish base and persuade the Poles to release our people. It was hoped that my knowledge of the language plus the fact that Krasicki, Milashevski's adjutant, knew me well, would pull us through. ... We passed a few Russian posts, exchanged greetings and, after an hour, came to a completely unknown part of the woods where the first Polish post let us pass. We had to pass two more. They were all tough looking fellows, yet they had all*

*the grandeur of their uniforms including very shiny boots, brass buttons and elegant manners. We were very politely given an escort who took us to a regular house where Milashevski and his wife lived. The leader was polite as I presented our case. ... He confirmed he had our men who had "trespassed his territory" and would not tolerate such goings on. He was called outside ... In the room with me was a pretty blonde girl who introduced herself as Halina, the commander's wife. I don't know how it came upon me but I had the feeling that she, too, was a Jewess. During the course of our conversation she admitted it and asked me for secrecy. ... She was going to help all she could. ... When Milashevski returned, Halina took him aside and whispered quite a bit. When he turned to me, he smiled, warned again about his "territory", wrote a paper of release, shook hands with me and went out. ... As I came out of the house, Izaak [Boris' brother] and the other two fellows plus their rifles (but minus the ammunition) were sitting inside the buggy. They looked haggard after the ordeal ... We started toward our company ... Courtesy was given to us till the end and we came to the last post ... There was Milashevski himself on a horse. He stepped down, once more kissed my hand, the Polish way, complimented me on my language and manners, and I was given an open invitation to visit any time ..."*

A Soviet report refers to Itsek Rubezhevskii [Rubizhevski] as a greedy plunderer who was caught repeatedly in the act. In response to such activities, the head of the Frunze Brigade issued a warning that anyone caught robbing in Soviet partisan territory would be executed on the spot.

#### A postwar episode

The last living and youngest Bielski brother, Aharon, was only about 11 or 12 when he escaped to the Naliboki forest. His participation and impact on the life of the Bielski group was, in the assessment of Nechama Tec, "minimal, almost nonexistent." Aharon Bielski immigrated to the United States in 1951 and changed his name to Aron Bell. In October 2007 he was arrested in Florida along with his wife, and charged with swindling around \$250,000 in life savings from his 93-year-old Polish Catholic neighbour Janina Zaniewska, who herself had survived Nazi imprisonment during the war. After emptying her bank account, the Bells allegedly secreted the woman in a nursing home in Poland. In a plea deal, they agreed to repay the money in exchange for having the charges dropped.

#### German Retaliations

A few months after the Naliboki massacre, from July 13 to August 8, 1943, as part of a massive anti-partisan sweep known as Operation Hermann, some 60,000 German troops – with the

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## The Siphon, Wal-mart and Polish attitude

By: **Justyna Ball**

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com/>

One of the childhood pleasures for us kids living in the city was the idea of getting together with a couple of friends after school, going across the street, behind the St. Kostka church (the same one in the Zoliborz district, (where several years later, Fr. Popie'uszko would preach) and chipping in 5 zł for a siphon of pear flavored soda water. The place was known as „U Dziada” translating to “Old Man's Place.” On a hot day, it was a much better option than the saturator water at the nearby old Wilson Square, then named Parisian Commune Square (now back to Wilson Square again...). The difference was that the saturator had only one glass that you could pour soda water into and flavor it with fruit syrup. The unofficial name of that mixed drink was „gruzliczanka,” which translated to ... “Tuberculosis water,” because pretty much everybody used it and you were expected to get sick and die. Although I had never heard of such a case.

The siphon at „U Dziada” came with no glass although we did not need one. Simply we squirted that pear water straight into our mouths (you actually needed a second person to do that) without our lips touching any part of the glass bottle and without wasting any water either. That was the whole idea.

Sitting on the curb, in the shade of the church building, drinking from the old fashioned siphon bottle, what a thrill...

After we finished, we got a 2 zł 50groszy deposit back, which meant that we just experienced one of life's pleasures for only 2 zł 50 groszy. Some of the best things in life do come cheap...

Just around the corner, walking along the side of the long building at Krasińskiego Street would lead you to the shoe repair shop. On the way, you would pass the vegetable shop marked by the aroma of the sauerkraut and pickles in brine, usually scooped from the barrel by huge wooden claws. Across the street from the shoe repairman's shop was a “mydlarnia” - soap, cleaning supplies, and cosmetics store. Fabric for my summer dresses came from a shop on the same

street. And my whole life (except for the vacation in the countryside) and social crowd evolved around that Parisian Commune Square. The travel agency Orbis, book and record store, Delikatesy, where we bought “dodoni” canned orange juice, and where kids from school sneaked out to buy kefir and baguettes. The school's student shop, besides notebooks and pencils, offered some snacks and fresh glazed pączki for 2 zł.

Did I expect „U Dziada” (the siphon filling station) to still be there on my trips to Warsaw over the years? Of course not! I don't even expect the street name be the same.

Although, the church most likely will be dedicated to the same saint.

There were several movie theaters within walking distance. Repertoire: “Zorro” with French actor Alain Delon, “Headless Rider” (Russian), “In Desert and Wilderness,” the adaptation of the book by Henryk Sienkiewicz. My first movie ever, as I can recall, was “Flip & Flap in the Foreign Legion” in the US known as “Laurel & Hardy.”

As a child I was allowed, as were all my friends, to walk the area alone, my dog came along later on. The light colored fluffy animal, 20 cm above ground level that I could hardly consider a guard dog, anyway, although she barked vigorously at every man in uniform.

We children were allowed to walk alone even though the wave of the “black Volga” scare spread. Rumor had it that someone who was driving that type of (Russian made) car, was kidnapping children. The small Fiat wasn't popular yet, and if you wanted to get the fear effect, a “black Volga” sounds much better than “white Fiat 125P” (Fiats did not come in black).

Under communism, small entrepreneurs were in business although they were hardly prosperous unless you owned greenhouses with several of them in the Warsaw suburbs.

Later on, some cashed in on growing ... white mushrooms. Now Poles make money raising ... snails to be shipped to France where they become “escargots” and are served on French tables, I'm not kidding...

In the US, over the years, I found several articles about an intriguing (to Americans, not so to us, Polish immigrants) fact occurring in post-war

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## Calendar of Events

**25 – 27, XI International Polish Alpine Ski and Snowboard competition for a trophy funded by the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles** in Loveland, Colorado. Information at [www.tatryskiclub.com](http://www.tatryskiclub.com)

**29, Sun 1:30 p.m., PAC General Meeting, Sala Kaszubska, Polish Parish in Los Angeles.**

**Apr 5, Sun, Noon, Ninth Anniversary of the Polish Club and Easter Celebration** at Clubhouse Six, the Polish Club of Laguna Woods; Information: Irena (949) 206-9122

**11, Sat, Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church – 3424 W. Adams Blvd. – Los Angeles**

**Traditional Blessing of food baskets Every half hour - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**1:00 p.m. Egg Hunt on the grounds of the Szarotka Retirement Home**

**3400 W. Adams Blvd., Sponsored by the Polish National Alliance Info.: 626-836-5889.**

**Pope John Paul Center 3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda Traditional Blessing of food**

**baskets Every half hour - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - Egg Hunt at noon - church grounds.**

### April 12 - Happy Easter

**18 and 19, Sat. & Sun., Spring Bazaar, Polish Parish in LA**

**19, Sun., Cathedral Mass to honor Pope John Paul II CANCELLED** Info: 562-426-9830

**19, Sun., 9 pm, CBS Channel 2 - “The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler”** Based on the Courageous True Story of 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Irena Sendler, who is credited with saving the lives of 2,500 Jewish Children during WW II.

**23 – May 3, Tenth Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles.** Info: Wladek 818-982-8827.

**Apr 26, 1:00 pm Yorba Linda - 20 Anniversary of the Polish School – Helena Modjeska, Banquet, Information: Elizabeth 310-831-0708, Gabriela 949-701-5346.**

**May 2, Sat., Polish Club, Laguna Woods - Polish Tea Party, Info: Irena 949-206-9122.**

**2, Sat., 6:00 p.m., Polish-American Association of San Diego's Annual Dinner Ball** at St. Therese Parish 6016 Camino Rico. Music for dancing provided by the Polonia Trio. Entertainment by the Polonia Dancers. Door prizes. For information and tickets:

(619) 295-9234, (619) 583-5858, (619) 229-9141, (619) 282-0075, (858) 485-9759

3, Constitution Day, Polish School in Yorba Linda.

**6 & 7, Modjeska Historic House, Warszawa Restaurant and Ganna Walska Gardens – An Excursion, Reservations deadline: March 27.** Info: Irena 949-206-9122

**30, Commemoration of 218<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Polish Constitution of May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1791**

**“Poland Forever”, Depictions of famous Poles in history, dinner and dancing at the Pasadena Elks Lodge, Info: Marty 626-577-9797. (AD on page 5 for more info.)**

**Jun 7, Sun., Day of Brotherhood, Polish Parish in LA**

**Jun 21, Sun., 10:30 am – 5:00 pm, Proud to be Polish Festival, Yorba Linda**

**Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: [zbyskoopet@aol.com](mailto:zbyskoopet@aol.com) ★**

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