



Essie: The True Story of a Teenage Fighter in the Bielski Partisans

By Essie Shor, Andrea Zakin

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Some Jews in the Holocaust fought back! This is the story of one of them. Living in the forest through bitter winter stalking and being stalked Essie's life in the Bielski Partisan camp is full of danger, adventure, and intrigue. Essie Shor was just 16 when the Nazis invaded her town, Novogrudek (then a part of Poland, now in Belarus) and killed 4000 Jews on a single day, including her mother and all her brothers and sisters. The 700 who remained, including Essie and her father, were herded into prison-like conditions in the ghetto the Nazis established. But Essie escaped at night through a hole in the fence, and became one of the first 25 Jews to join her cousins, the Bielski Brothers, in an encampment that would eventually save 1200 Jews. Living in the forest, we no longer felt like cattle, as we had in the ghetto. However, we had to move constantly. There were German soldiers looking for us everywhere, and sometimes villagers living nearby would tell them where we were. Once, we had to leave in a hurry when the Nazis discovered the hoof prints of our cows in the snow. This was a different kind of fear. We went from being caged to being hunted. And to being a hunter. Essie became a teenage Partisan, a guerilla fighter in the resistance. More than 60 years later, Essie still remembers those two years fighting for the freedom of her people. Now, as more people learn about the Bielski Partisans by watching the movie, Defiance, she shares her dramatic story at last.

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Editorial Review

Review

Essie Shor has written what would make a great novel, was it not in fact a true story. As a teenager in Poland when the Nazis arrived, she fled into the forest and joined the Bielski Partisans, a group of disparate people all of whom had one thing in common --they were Jews trying to survive. With tenacity, camaraderie, and a determination to stay alive and true to their Jewish values, Essie tells us how she and her fellow partisans waged their own war against evil. Essie is an important contribution to the understanding of the horrors of the Holocaust and the spirit of survival. --Abraham H. Foxman, a Holocaust survivor, is National Director of the Anti-Defamation League

About the Author

Essie Shor: After a year enslaved in the ghetto of her home town of Novogrudek, where most of her family was killed by the Nazis, teenage Essie Shor daringly escaped. She spent the next two years in the forest encampment led by her cousins, the Bielski Brothers, and became a partisan, a guerrilla fighter attacking the Nazi war machine. Following the war, she married Jerry Shor after a one-month courtship, and moved with her husband and two-year-old daughter to New York, where she had a second daughter. Essie worked for a major book manufacturer, and eventually became a public school teacher, retiring at age 80. She lives in New York City. Andrea Zakin: A professor at Lehman College, taught an early childhood education class that Essie attended at Lehman College in the Bronx. . This book came out of an art project Essie did for Andrea Á,Á´s class, representing her life in the forest bunker. Andrea suggested that Essie write this story for young adult readers because it would represent a unique perspective on this aspect of the war from an adolescent Á,Á´s point of view. And so began the collaboration Á,Á®at first between teacher and student, and then between co-authors and friends. Andrea is also a widely known painter, who uses her art to comment on political and social issues. She lives with her husband and teenage daughter in New York.

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Ann Gross:

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