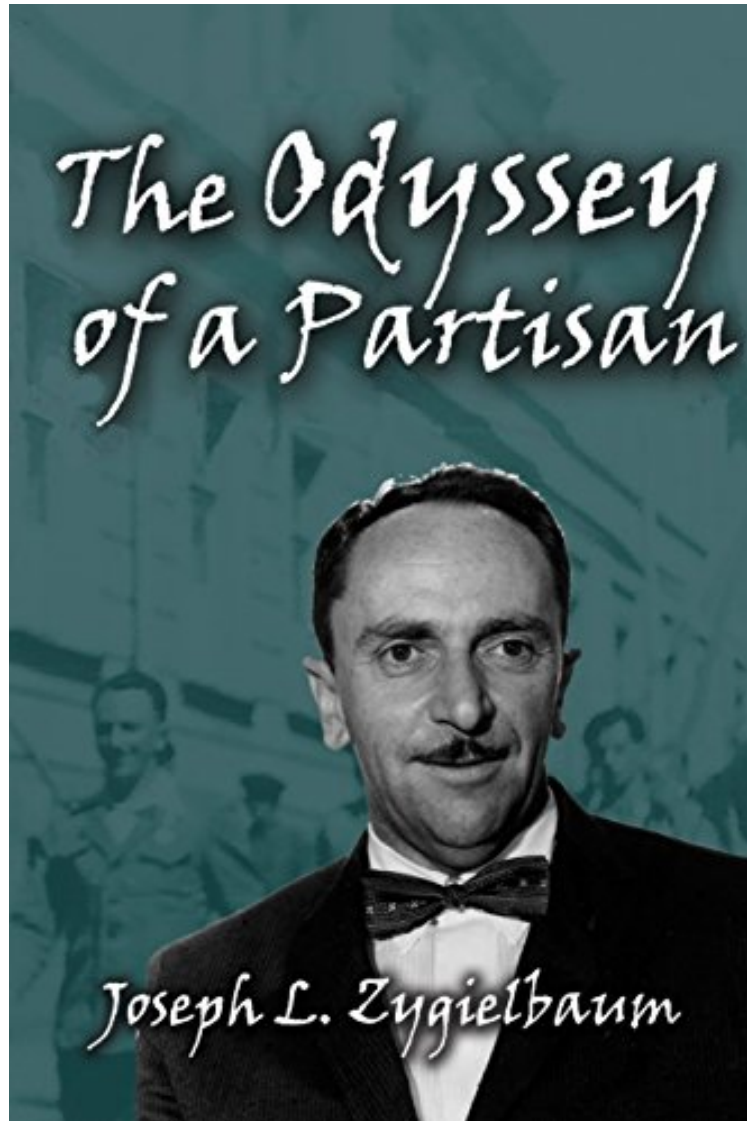


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## The Odyssey of a Partisan

*Joseph L. Zygielbaum*

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**Joseph L. Zygielbaum : The Odyssey of a Partisan** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Odyssey of a Partisan:

This is the amazing and inspiring true story of a Polish Jewish Partisan leader and Soviet captive during World War II. Joseph L. Zygielbaum fought the Nazis under the Polish and Soviet flags and alongside the American Office of

Strategic Services. These memoirs reveal his heroism in the face of personal tragedy and place him squarely in the heart of Holocaust history. Zygielbaum, the son of the famed Polish martyr Szmul Zygielbaum, begins with a description of his childhood and then takes the reader through an odyssey spanning horrendous events from 1939 to 1945 and the battlefields of Eastern and Northern Europe. A reserve officer in the Polish army at 19 years old, Zygielbaum witnesses the German and Russian invasion of his homeland. He swiftly becomes a Partisan leader. After his wife and toddler son are murdered by the Nazis, he undertakes ever more risky missions and is captured by the Russians, narrowly escaping execution as a spy. He relates his many experiences in the USSR, culminating in his being impressed into the Red Army to fight the Germans. As a special forces fighter, he is deployed into many battle zones. Close to the end of the war, he escapes and returns to Poland, where he meets and marries his new love and emigrates with her to the United States. Zygielbaum's book was published after his death in 1995 by his sons, long after he had completed a noted career in the early American space program. The story relates many everyday aspects of life as a Partisan and as a Soviet soldier, amid the ever-present terror of the war and the tragedy all around.

About the Author Joseph L. Zygielbaum was the son of the famous Polish labor leader, Szmul Zygielbaum, who figured prominently in the effort to save the Polish Jews from the Holocaust. Zygielbaum had completed a mechanical engineering degree and was a reserve officer in the Polish Army in 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, launching World War II. Zygielbaum married his childhood sweetheart in the midst of the upheaval, and he organized a Jewish Partisan group in Warsaw. The Nazis later captured and killed his wife and young son, along with many of the Partisans. Zygielbaum moved into the Polish forests, where he carried out many attacks against German troops and supply transports, working closely with the American Office of Strategic Services. After Germany attacked the USSR in 1941, he volunteered to cross the battle lines to contact with the Red Army, but they arrested him as a spy. He narrowly escaped execution and was put to work as an engineer and, later, as a Red Army commando. Fighting courageously in far-flung places across Europe, Zygielbaum was promoted and decorated and learned much about the Soviet military and its leaders. But as the war was ending, he escaped from a troop train and returned to Warsaw. There he met and married the new love of his life. The couple emigrated to the US, took up a modest, hard-working civilian life, and became US citizens. Eventually, Zygielbaum became a precision machinist at Caltech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, where he fabricated parts for America's first successful space satellite. But when the Russians beat the US into space with Sputnik 1 in 1957, Zygielbaum was moved into JPL's technical library to begin translation and analysis of technical publications and materials on Soviet space and military programs. He was involved in many US defense intelligence efforts through the 1960s and became an honorary US Air Force officer. After US space program investment declined, Zygielbaum held a variety of more mundane jobs until his retirement due to failing health. During his retirement, he took on the role of translator and liaison with Russian veterans organizations on behalf of the Brotherhood of All Veterans Organizations. He appreciated both the irony of this new relationship with Red Army veterans and the peacemaking intentions of these groups. Zygielbaum died of cancer in 1995 and was survived by his wife and two sons. Having served under three flags, Zygielbaum was buried with full military honors.