# **Chapter One“You Were with the Nazis!”: From Revenge to Retribution in Post-Nazi Europe**

## “They Have Lost Every Remnant of Humanity” – Survivors Lynch Former Supervisors

In 1945, American forces liberated starved and sick inmates from Bad Tölz, a sub-camp of the Dachau concentration camp. A week later, in early May, a Jewish-American officer arranged for a memorial ceremony in a nearby movie theater, previously an SS officer school. Former inmates, some leaning on walking sticks, others supporting ailing friends, gathered there.

At the head table sat an American officer; beside him, among others, were Itzik Gritzmacher and Itzik Borestein, Jews who, as kapos, had overseen their coreligionists in the camp. The audience listened quietly as the chair delivered his opening remarks. Next to speak was one of the Jews seated at the head table. During his speech, some in the audience began to squirm in discomfort. As another former internee rose to speak, a buzz ran through the crowd. Then, at the front of the theater, an inmate sprang to his feet. With all eyes focused on him, he raised his fists and faced his fellows, saying angrily, “One is speaking here about the German SS men, but before we judge them, let us take revenge on the Jewish SS men among us!”

Members of the audience leapt at the two former kapos. For a few seconds the Americans in the room were in a state of shock. Lube Meskup, Itzik Gritzmacher’s girlfriend and herself an ex-kapo, blocked the hall doors, trying to save her boyfriend: the inmates proceeded to beat her. The mob caught Gritzmacher and set upon him, crying “Murderer!” and “Nazi!” Within seconds, the American soldiers pushed the crowd back and prevented it from killing the man. Similar scenes were repeated in liberated camps and towns across Poland, France, Greece, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe. For some survivors, liberation was not a time to celebrate freedom or mourn the loss of loved ones, but rather an opportunity to take revenge and settle scores.