# **Chapter One “You Were with the Nazis!”**

# **From Revenge to Retribution in Post-Nazi Europe**

## “They Have Lost Every Remnant of Humanity”

## – Survivors Lynching Former Supervisors

In 1945, American forces liberated the 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 movie theater in what had then been the SS officer school nearby. Former inmates, some leaning on canes, others supporting ailing friends, gathered in the theater.

At a head table sat an American officer, and beside him, among others, sat Itzik Gritzmacher and Itzik Borestein, both of them Jews who, as kapos, had overseen other Jews in the camp. The audience listened quietly as the chair of the gathering delivered his opening remarks. Next to speak was one of the Jews who had been seated at the head table. During his speech, some in the audience began to squirm in discomfort. Another former internee rose to speak. A buzz went through the crowd. Then, from the front of the theater, a former inmate sprang to his feet. With all eyes focused on him, the inmate raised his fists and faced his fellow inmates, 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, the girlfriend of Itzik Gritzmacher and herself a former kapo, blocked the hall doors, trying to save her boyfriend. The inmates then proceeded to beat her. The mob grabbed Itzik and began beating him, crying “Murderer!” and “Nazi!” Within seconds, the American soldiers pushed the crowd back and prevented it from killing the former kapo. Similar scenes were repeated in liberated camps and towns across Poland, France, Greece, The Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe. For some of the survivors, liberation had had not been a time to celebrate freedom nor mourn the loss of loved ones, but rather a time to take revenge and settle accounts.