# **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 in what had been an SS officer school. Former inmates, some leaning on a walking sticks, others supporting ailing friends, gathered in the theater.

At a head table sat an American officer, and sitting on either side of him were Itzik Gritzmacher and Itzik Borestein, both 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. The 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, in the front of the theater, a former inmate sprang to his feet. With all eyes focused on him, he raised his fists and addressed 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!”

Immediately, 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 caught on to Itzik and beat him, crying “Murderer!” and “Nazi!” The American soldiers quickly came to and pushed back the crowd, preventing it from killing the former kapos. Similar scenes were repeated in liberated camps and towns across Poland, France, Greece, Holland, and elsewhere in Europe. For some of the survivors, liberation had not been a time to celebrate freedom or mourn the loss of loved ones—rather, it was a time to take revenge and settle accounts.