H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Jim G. Tobias, Peter Zinke.** *NAKAM: JÖ¼dische Rache an NS-TÖ¤tern.* Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 2000. 173 pp. (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-89458-194-7.

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Jim G. Tobias and Peter Zinke. *NAKAM: Juedische Rache an NS-Taetern* (NAKAM: Jewish Vengeance on Nazi Perpetrators). Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 2000. 173 pp. Full bibliography and notes; no index. DM 28.40 (plus shipping, or $30 in all). ISBN: 3-89458-194.8

Tobias, whom the book cover describes as a journalist, and Zinke, who is termed a historian, use the first 56 pages of their small paperback book on the attempts by a group of former Jewish partisans to exact vengeance on the murderers of their people by two separate operations.

[I have found no references to either man anywhere on the Internet. The publisher is not to be found, either.]

Plan A called for the poisoning of German water supplies; Plan B sought specific vengeance against members of the SS and Gestapo who were imprisoned in an American POW camp called Nuernberg-Langwasser. The camp had previously been Straflager 13 (Punishment Camp 13) for Soviet prisoners of war and slave laborers. Most people, however, would recognize it better if it were described as a U.S. Army camp on the site where the Nuremberg Nazi rallies took place. A second attempt aimed at a POW camp in Dachau was called off.

Plan A was canceled because Jewish leaders in Palestine were fearful of harming the innocent, and the man bringing the poison from Palestine, Abba Kovner, was arrested by the British. The authors indicate their belief that Kovner was betrayed by the Jewish leadership. Tobias and Zinke, in one of their more maddening assertions, state that Kovner had a long discussion with Chaim Weizmann, later the first president of Israel, about obtaining the necessary poison. For their proof of this meeting, they cite *Forged in Fury*, a novel by Michael Elkins, a journalist for the British Broadcasting Corp. They destroy the credibility of this citation later in their book when they go through -Forged in Fury - and prove that every assertion by Elkins is false.

And it is Elkins' version of the poisoning of the bread that spurred my interest. (Disclaimer: Elkins was my source for the poisoning deaths of 200 or 300 in a novel I wrote.) "Elkins' depiction of the bread poisoning in Nuremberg differs widely from historical facts," Tobias and Zinke say. "Thus, the poison was delivered directly to the bakery, according to Elkins, in a British army truck of the Jewish Brigade. To get the watchman out of the way and to allow the group entry to the work area, a female avenger disguised herself as a prostitute and seduced him. Leipke Distel and Joseph Harmatz, who took part in the operation, describe their operation quite differently."

For the record, the Jewish Brigade's only time in German was when the soldiers were moved from northern Italy to Holland in sealed boxcars, the same kind of boxcars that took their loved ones to the camps. The British feared any interaction between the Brigade and the German population.

Elkins also said that avengers killed Odilo Globocnik, the SS head of Operation Reinhard and the man whom Hitler called the best Jew-killer of them all because he set up the extermination camps in the area of Lublin and took credit for the murder of two million Jews. Tobias and Zinke say Globocnik committed suicide. They cite The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust. The historian Gerald Reitlinger is much more cautious, saying that Globocnik's suicide in Carinthia is alleged.

The authors spent about five years researching their story, talking to many of the participants and illustrating their book with their pictures. And their story is not just limited to NAKAM, the name they have chosen for the group, although its proper name was Dam Yehudi Nakam (Avenge Jewish Blood, which has previously been known by its Hebrew acronym DIN).

They tell the story of the Jewish Brigade, which, while based in Tarvisio in northern Italy, carried out some murders of Nazis while smuggling 15,000 Jews to Italy on their way to Palestine. They also tell the story of the German Section of the Palmach, the shock formations of the

official Jewish underground in Palestine, the Haganah. This story gets a bit dressed up because the blond, blue-eyed German Section was trained for a last-ditch stand by the Jews of Palestine in Operation Fortress Carmel, where a Massada-like mass suicide by Palestine Jewry was contemplated to greet Rommel's Afrika Korps.

According to the authors, the German Section trained in German uniforms, with German weapons, singing German songs, including the anti-Jewish ones.

One of the authors' prime sources for all this was Ollie Giveon, who had served in the German Section. They also talked to all the members of the NAKAM group, but carefully left out some of their last names and say that one of their chief sources was hidden in a pseudonym "because he spends much time on Germany." Yet they dedicated the book to the pseudonymous Olek Hirsch and to the late Leipke Distel, who actually poisoned the bread.

The major revelation of this book is that the leadership of Jewish Palestine planted a double agent in the midst of the group and that he diluted the arsenic which was painted on the dark bread at the bakery supplying the camp (the white bread was baked for the American guard company). The dilution assured that nobody died from the poisoning, which brings up another matter of historical interest.

Not only did Elkins talk of 200 to 300 deaths, but so did the historian Michael Bar Zohar in his *The Avengers*, (London, 1968) who gave a figure of 700 to 800 dead. The New York Times on April 23, 1946, said 207 were in the hospital but none had died.

This little book clears up a lot of myths, but still leaves clouds over what really happened.

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