



The Enemy I Knew: German Jews in the Allied Military in World War II

Steven Karras, Michael Berenbaum

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Even Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize winning survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, struggles with the question: Why didn't the Jews fight back? And finally, in view of the circumstances--even now, who would believe what was happening?--he concludes that the question is "not why all the Jews did NOT fight, but how do many of them DID. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength--spiritual and physical--to resist?" In fact, over 10,000 German Jews--34 percent of the refugee population between the ages of eighteen and forty--fought in the allied armies of World War II.

This book honors those European-born Jewish combat veterans of World War II--refugees from the Nazi regime in Germany and Austria who faced their persecutors by joining the Allied Forces in a fight against the country of their birth. These twenty-seven interviews take readers into the unique and harrowing experience of German and Austrian Jews who served as Allied soldiers in North Africa and Europe--brave men and one woman whose service restored a sense of dignity and allowed them to rise above their former victimization at the hands of Nazi oppressors. All burned with anger at the Germans who had subjected them, often as young children, to cruelty in everyday life in their hometowns, and to ridicule in the national media. As soldiers who knew the language and psychology of the enemy better than any of their comrades, they struck back with new-found pride against the rampant injustice that had annihilated their families, destroyed their prospects, and subjected many of them to the worst forms of physical abuse, both random and terrifying. In *The Enemy I Knew* they tell their stories, and the world is richer for their heroic acts, and for their testimony.

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