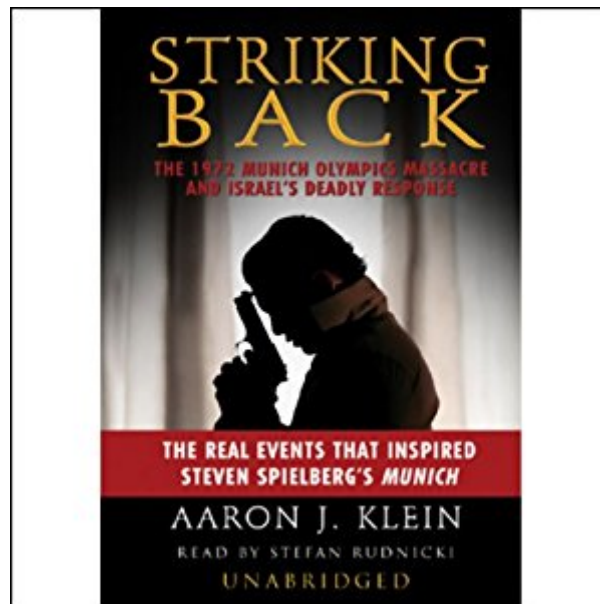


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Striking Back: The 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre And Israel's Deadly Response



Synopsis

1972. The Munich Olympics. Palestinian members of the Black September group murder eleven Israeli athletes. Nine-hundred-million people watch the crisis unfold on television, witnessing a tragedy that inaugurates the modern age of terror. Back in Israel, Prime Minister Golda Meir vows to track down those responsible and, in Menachem Begin's words, run these criminals and murderers off the face of the earth. A secret Mossad unit is mobilized, a list of targets drawn up. Thus begins the Israeli response, a mission that unfolds not over months but over decades. The Mossad has never spoken about this operation. No one has known the real story, until now. In this riveting account Aaron Klein peels back the layers of myth and misinformation about the shadow war against Black September and other terrorist groups. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This excellent book is by an Israeli journalist who was able to get remarkable access to Mossad. One might think this would result in a one-sided presentation, but Klein has done an excellent job of being extremely objective and analyzing the twin motivations of revenge and deterrence that underlay the strike-back assassinations after Munich. The only point on which he isn't objective (and with good reason) is in his unreserved condemnation of the action, inaction, negligence, and callousness (not to mention stupidity) of the German officials during the 21 hours or so of the hostage crisis. The book is worth reading for his thorough account of that one day in September. Klein's analysis of the Mossad reaction is unsparing, especially in the disaster and tragedy at Lilliehammer, when Mossad agents killed an innocent man whom they should have

realized was not Ali Hassan Salameh ("The Red Prince"). Six Mossad operatives were actually imprisoned in Norway for this crime, and the fact that "Munich" never makes mention of this incident is sufficient refutation to those who ridiculously claim that Spielberg and Tony Kushner were insufficiently sympathetic to Israel. While he wrote the book in Hebrew, Klein makes it clear this is not an apologia for Mossad. He sternly questions the rightness of the process in which Palestinian terrorists were identified and "prosecuted" in "show trials" before Israeli Prime Ministers who issued death sentences. People identified as "architects" of Munich often had little if any direct connection to the tragedy. He also carefully analyses the deterrence claim. While Black September terrorism largely faded after the strike-back assassinations, this appears to have had much to do with the PLO's attempt for legitimacy (Arafat addressing the U.S. in 1974, etc).

Aaron Klein's book "Striking Back" and Steven Spielberg's film "Munich" chronicle the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes and coaches by the Black September Palestinian organization at the 1972 Munich Olympic games and tell the story of the Israeli's' government's response, which included a covert campaign to assassinate the terrorists responsible for planning the massacre. "Munich" is a decent spy movie. "Striking Back" is exciting to read. But the book seems more balanced and credible to me, and it provides a real life case study that is probably worth understanding in the context of today's ongoing war on terror, while the movie appears to bend the facts to fit the story that Spielberg wants to tell. Both the book and the movie do an excellent job recounting the events in Munich. They both capture many of the same details, like the scene where the Palestinian terrorists force their way into the Israeli dorm rooms using the barrel of an AK-47 as a lever to push open the door while an Israeli athlete tries to hold it shut. Evidently both the filmmaker and author have studied the primary sources. Where the two diverge is in the story of the Israeli government's response. While I have no insight into clandestine operations, I found the book's account much more believable and interesting and note that the author has respectable credentials (including a stint in the Israeli army) and claims to have interviewed numerous sources with firsthand experience of the events. For example, in the movie, the entire responsibility for assassinating 11 Palestinian terrorists is placed on the shoulders of a single agent, who goes so deeply underground that he ostensibly no longer works for the Mossad.

When it comes to the story of the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre and its aftermath there is fact and there is fiction. The fictional element was illustrated by filmmaker Steven Spielberg's Munich. He claimed the film was 'inspired by real events' but its plot lines were implausible, not to mention the

subjective political posturing and sanctimonious moralising. Funnily enough, left-wing Israeli journalist Aaron Klein has produced a thoughtful and balanced factual account of the Olympic slaughter and the Mossad counter-terrorist campaign that decimated the PLO's 'Black September' unit that perpetrated the attack. Klein is an IDF reservist intelligence officer, and he has obviously put his spooky connections to good use. Spielberg based his film on a widely discredited book relating the Walter Mitty fantasies of a Mossad-wannabe. By contrast, Klein interviewed most of the major Israeli players who planned and executed the operations against Black September. And just as in the craft of intelligence itself, excellent sources provide excellent information. While Munich-the-movie is a case of garbage-in-garbage-out, Klein provides us with an accurate portrayal of precisely what the Israelis did, how they did it, and for what purposes it was done. The angst and disillusionment that afflict Spielberg's fictional Israeli undercover agents are nowhere to be seen in Striking Back. During an interview with the 7:30 Report, Klein explained that the Mossadniks, in fact, were firmly imbued with a sense of the righteousness of their cause: I spoke with more than 50 veterans of Mossad and military intelligence. There was no remorse, no second thoughts. They were proud; most of them were proud of what they did and they are still proud of what they did. And in my personal opinion, rightly so!

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