

Hitler's Jewish Soldiers



Wehrmacht Private Werner Goldberg²
"The Ideal German Soldier"

By Jerry Klinger

"The Ideal German Soldier"

"In hardly any people in the world is the instinct of self-preservation developed more strongly than in the so called "chosen." ...What people, finally, has gone through greater upheavals than this one – and nevertheless issued from the mightiest catastrophes of mankind unchanged? What an infinitely tough will to live and preserve the species from these facts."

Adolf Hitler³ – Mein Kampf⁴

In 1940, Unteroffizier Dieter Bergmann wrote to his Jewish grandmother, Elly Landesberg nee Moackrauer:

"Don't you realize how much I'm with my whole being rooted in Germany. My life would be very sad without my homeland, without the wonderful German art, without the belief in Germany's powerful past and the powerful future that awaits Germany. Do you think that I can tear that all out of my heart?...Don't I also have an obligation to my parents, to my brother who showed his love to our Fatherland by dying a hero's death on the battlefield....Someday, I want to be a German amongst Germans and no longer a second-class citizen only because my wonderful mother is Jewish."⁵

"Under traditional Jewish law, a child born to a Jewish mother, no matter whom the father may have been, is Jewish.... I am confused.... Who is a Jew? What is a Jew? When are you a Jew? What if you do not want to be a Jew? Can we choose?"

William Rabinowitz

"The Nuremberg Laws or Nurnberg Laws ([German: Nürnberger Gesetze](#)) of 1935 were [anti-Semitic laws](#) in [Nazi Germany](#) introduced at the annual [Nuremberg Rally](#) of the [Nazi Party](#). After the [takeover of power in 1933](#) by [Hitler](#), [Nazism](#) became an official [ideology](#) incorporating [scientific racism](#) and [anti-Semitism](#). There was a rapid growth in German legislation directed at [Jews](#), such as the [Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service](#) which banned "non-Aryans" from the civil-service."

The Nuremberg Laws, as they became known, did not define a "Jew" as someone with particular religious beliefs. Instead, anyone who had three or four Jewish grandparents was defined as a Jew, regardless of whether that individual identified himself or herself as a Jew or belonged to the Jewish religious community. Many Germans who had not practiced Judaism for years found themselves caught in the grip of Nazi terror. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity were defined as Jews."⁶

The lack of a clear legal method of [defining who was Jewish](#) had, however, allowed some Jews to escape some forms of discrimination aimed at them. The enactment of laws identifying who was Jewish made it easier for the Nazis to enforce legislation restricting the basic rights of German Jews....



Nurnberg Law – 1935 Racial Chart

"The Laws for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor

(September 15, 1935) Moved by the understanding that the purity of German blood is essential to the further existence of the German people, and inspired by the uncompromising determination to safeguard the future of the German nation, the Reichstag has unanimously resolved upon the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

Section 1

1. [Marriages](#) between Jews and citizens ([German](#): *Staatsangehörige*) of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Marriages concluded in defiance of this law are void, even if, for the purpose of evading this law, they were concluded abroad.
2. Proceedings for annulment may be initiated only by the [Public Prosecutor](#).

Section 2

[Extramarital sexual intercourse between Jews and subjects of the state of Germany or related blood is forbidden.](#)

Section 3

Jews will not be permitted to employ female citizens under the age of 45, of German or kindred blood, as [domestic workers](#).

Section 4

1. Jews are forbidden to display the [Reich](#) and [national flag](#) or the [national colors](#).
2. On the other hand they are permitted to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Section 5

1. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of Section 1 will be punished with [hard labor](#).
2. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of Section 2 will be punished with [imprisonment](#) or with hard labor.
3. A person who acts contrary to the provisions of Sections 3 or 4 will be punished with imprisonment up to a year and with a [fine](#), or with one of these penalties.

Section 6

The Reich Minister of the Interior in agreement with the Deputy Fuehrer and the Reich [Minister of Justice](#) will issue the legal and administrative regulations required for the enforcement and supplementing of this law.

Section 7

The law will become effective on the day after its promulgation; Section 3, however, not until January 1, 1936.

The Nurmberg Laws, intended to define who is a Jew and who is an Aryan, were deeply flawed. They were flawed, not just because of the "racial" separation they were intended to create

between the Jew and the non-Jew, but because they failed to make clear what to do with the *Mischlings*.

"The word *Mischling* means 'half-caste, mongrel or hybrid' ... The term was first applied to people with one black and one white parent in Germany's African colonies. Some Germans at the time called these children the 'Rehoboth bastards.' In the 1920's, when French colonial soldiers had affairs with women in German territories they occupied, the children who resulted were called Mischling. Hitler believed that the Jews brought these French Blacks to Germany to destroy the 'White Race.'

...In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws created two new "racial" categories: the half-Jew (Jewish Mischling first degree), and the quarter -Jew (Jewish Mischling second degree). A half-Jew had two Jewish grandparents; a quarter -Jew had one. Since Nazi racial policy declared anyone of the Jewish religion a full Jew regardless of ancestry, most were by definition Christians."

...After the advent of Nazi rule in 1933, the process of assimilation came to a halt, but the results of that assimilation, namely Mischlings, confounded many Nazis.

Nazis were confused about Mischlings, since they were both Jewish and German. Adolf Eichmann, SS-Obersturmbannfueher and chief of the Jewish Evacuation Office of the Gestapo, acknowledged that the unclear racial position of Mischling temporarily protected them. For the Nazis, Mischling were also half or three-quarters German, and thus 50 percent or 75 percent valuable."⁷

The confused status of the Mischling resulted in confused responses. Werner Eisner, a half-Jew and severely wounded Wehrmacht veteran was deported to Auschwitz for sleeping with an Aryan. Dr. Hans Serelman, a German Jew, was also sent to a concentration camp. His crime, he donated his own blood to save a non-Jewish patient.

In practice Mischlings German citizenship was stripped away. They were denied access to certain universities for advanced degrees including medicine and law. They were denied access to recreational facilities and civilian jobs. Mischlings were denied positions of authority over Aryans. They were excluded from some churches, even though they were baptized Christians. They were socially ostracized.

"The *Evangelische Landeskirche* officially announced that 'racially Jewish Christians have no place and no rights' as members in the Protestant Church."⁸

Being 50% Jewish, or only 25% Jewish, did not protect the Mischlings. Growing "racial" restrictions on Mischlings slowly constructed a bleak future. The sudden grouping of the Mischling with the Jew logically should have created a common link of sympathy and mutual support between the Mischling and the Jew. It did not.

Most Mischlings did not identify with the Jewish community. Many had grown up as baptized Christians and even were themselves very anti-Semitic. They preferred to think of themselves as normal, as part of the whole of German fabric, as part of the "Volk". Their language, their

culture, the societal relationships and schooling all had been German. Even for those who grew up knowing that they had had a parent who was Jewish, they preferred not be left behind and identified as Jewish. They yearned, worked and did everything within their capabilities to prove themselves as good, loyal members of the Germanic peoples. They needed to show the German world that their German blood was the dominant force that flowed in their veins.

On the other hand, the pure Germans without the taint of Jewish blood, kept a closer eye on the Mischling. They kept an eye to see if any of the corrupting influence of Jewish blood showed itself.

Historically, one of the ways for Jews to prove themselves more German than Jewish was to fight for the "Fatherland".

Many Jews had served in the German and Austrian armies during World War I. Tens of thousands had died in that conflict, laying down their lives for the Kaiser and the Emperor. A large number of Jews rose to officer ranks, especially in the Austrian army. Thousands of Jews, in both armies, were decorated for bravery with the highest honors. Service in the armed forces, during World War I, had been a way for the Jew to gain access to greater acceptance, opportunity and to prove their loyalty to everything Germanic.

As the Nazi political and war machine rumbled into life and rearmament, only fifteen years after the end of World War I, existence for the Jew and the Mischling became more threatening, more tenuous. For the full Jew, little could be done in the "racist" mania of authoritarian Germany. The Mischling faced a paradox. "During the war, many felt torn between the desire to belong, regain some of their lost pride, and protect themselves and their families through military service and the realization that to do so, they had to serve Hitler..."



Half-Jew Horst Geitner

Wehrmacht service, in the early years of the war, protected them from the Gestapo. Ilse Korner wrote of her deceased husband, half-Jew and Lieutenant Hans Joachim Korner, 'He wanted to distinguish himself through his bravery and willingness to fight as a soldier and thus, escape the persecution of the Nazis'..... their sense of pride made them seek every opportunity to be like everyone else.

Most believed their meritorious service would convince their comrades and society to accept them as "normal."⁹ Mischlings disproportionately risked their lives on the battlefield to prove themselves to their comrades, officers and Nazi masters. Many were decorated with Nazi Germany's highest military honors, including 20 who received the *Ritterkreuz*.¹⁰

Wehrmacht soldier Helmut Kruger's mother was Jewish. "He did all he could to prove his loyalty to Germany by showing his bravery in battle. He won the EKII, the EKI, and the Golden Wound Badge. His brother, Reinhardt, claimed that he was brave soldier only because he was a Mischling fearing to be called a "cowardly Jew (feiger Jude)'. "

The ironic paradox; 'Kruger stated that if it was not for his Jewish mother he would have joined the Party and the SS."¹¹

Mischling status greatly restricted upward mobility in German society and in the army. Mischlings, with the cooperation of their families, sought to change the official classification of who they were. They wanted to be recognized as Germans. One of the methods was to obtain legal waivers, *Genehmigungs*, granted by German officialdom – a toleration of their Mischling status because of their particular service and benefit to the Reich. The most sought after legal solution to Mischling disqualifications was for a legal review and determination of pure blood, racially untainted with Jewish blood, the *Deutschblutigkeitserkarung*.

Hermann Goering had said it was he who decided who was a Jew or not. The reality, the decision as to who ultimately was a Jew could only be granted by Adolf Hitler. Hitler reviewed each situation personally. With the *Deutschblutigkeitserkarung*, formerly classified Mischlings were cleared of any Jewish taint. They could and did advance to high administrative and military positions.



Half –Jew Field Marshall Erhard Milch

"In 1933 Frau Clara Milch went to her son-in-law, Fritz Heinrich Hermann, police president of Hagen and later S.S. general, and gave him an affidavit stating that her deceased uncle, Carl Brauer, rather than her Jewish husband Anton Milch, had fathered her six children. After SA Colonel Theo Croneiss denounced (Erhard) Milch¹² to Goering, Goering took Milch's mother's affidavit to Hitler. In 1935, Hitler accepted the mother's testimony and instructed Goering to have Dr. Kurt Meyer, head of the Reich Office for Genealogy Research, complete the paperwork. On 7 August 1935, Goering wrote Meyer to change Milch's father in his documents and issue him papers certifying his pure Aryan descent. After the war, according to one Goering's interrogators, John E. Dolibois, Goering was proud of his action to help half Jew Milch remain in Luftwaffe.... Milch became a Field Marshall who ran the Luftwaffe – in charge of planning, production and strategy.

Milch's daughter was married to an SS General."¹³

A large number of former Mischlings rose to high rank: 2 Field Marshals, 15 Generals, 2 full Generals, 8 Lieutenant Generals, and 5 Major Generals. Former Mischling were Nazi party members – 4 were full Jews, 15 were half Jews and 7 were quarter Jews.



Half-Jew General Helmut Wilberg



Half-Jew General Johannes Zuckertort



Half-Jew Col. Walter H. Hoellander



Half-Jew Commander Paul Ascher



Quarter-Jew Admiral Bernhard Rogge
1st Officer on the Bismar

Of the estimated 150,000 Mischlings, half Jews and quarter Jews, in the Nazi armies, most never rose to officer levels.

Wehrmacht soldier Joachim Lowen told his story. "My own brother (Heinz) went to the Gestapo and claimed that our mother was a slut and had been a prostitute. The Gestapo reviewed our case and declared us Deutschblutig (of German blood)." Mother was destroyed – Heinz died on the Russian front, he was an Oberscharführer of the Waffen SS."¹⁴

Yet some Mischlings and their families refused to abandon their own but were abandoned by the Jewish world. Of the many ironies of life in pre-Nazi and during the 12 years of Nazi Germany's existence, Jewish attitudes towards the Mischling were equally confused. Bryan Mark Rigg, the noted historian, in his book, *Hitler's Children*, interviewed 1,671 Mischlings. 60% were Halachically Jewish. He commented about those who had Jewish self identification:

"Half-Jews with Jewish fathers were more likely to feel a connection with Judaism than those with Jewish mothers, who by Halakah were Jews. This fact shows that Halacha in many respects was out of step with social reality – namely, that a father's religious convictions influenced a child's upbringing more than the mother's did. Perhaps this was because of the generally patriarchal nature of most German households. This corroborated by the fact that most in this study who were circumcised had Jewish fathers."¹⁵

Jewish traditional values frowned on intermarriage.

"Helmuth Kopp remembered how, on the few occasions he saw him during the 1920's and early 1930's, his Jewish grandfather, Louis Kaulbars, hit him with a whip and called him goy. Although he had a Jewish mother, his grandfather did not consider him Jewish. One day his grandmother protested this treatment, telling her husband, "That's our daughter Helen's child!" The grandfather replied, "No that's Wilhelm's goy!" My soul was damaged, Kopp said in 1995. Mother died in 1925, he went to live with his Jewish aunt and uncle. He attended orthodox school, and had a belated bris. He entered the Wehrmacht in 1941."¹⁶

As resources to aid Jews within Germany became strained, Jewish responses became twisted as well.

"When the youthful Hannah Klewansky went to the Gestapo office on the November morning after Reichskristallnacht. In 1938, to inquire where the Nazis had taken her Jewish father Eugen, a sign informed her that the Jewish Community Center was processing such inquiries. She went there and waited in a long line of anxious people looking for loved ones. When her turn arrived, the Jewish secretary got out her family's file. "Is your father Christian?" Hannah answered that yes he was a converted Jew. Then the official asked if she was Jewish. She answered that her mother was not Jewish and that she herself had been raised Christian. The secretary then sent Hannah away saying, "We don't deal with your kind." Hannah then boldly returned to the Gestapo to ask how she could locate her father. The officer took her to a back room where two SS men were playing cards. The officer asked the men if they like what they saw and left. "They raped her."¹⁷

Fortunately for the Mischlings, the war ended with Germany's defeat. Hitler had planned to exterminate them, completely cleansing the *German blood line* after German victory. The surviving Mischlings returned home. They all, like the general population of Germany and

Europe, claimed to have known nothing of the Holocaust. Many of the Mischlings were aware of rumors and stories. They had to know something as their own families were exterminated. Uniformly, they chose to know or acknowledge nothing. None admitted to being involved in atrocities against Jews. None admitted to being involved in atrocities but some of the highest ranking Mischlings were very aware of the murders and even administratively aided the logistics of the processes.

For Mischlings, the return home was as confused and difficult as it had been to be part of the Nazi story itself.

"After the war Mischlings tried to learn about their Jewish ancestry. (Some fought for Israel in the War of Independence.) Some converted, many visited Israel, Half-Jew Werner Eisner's son Mijail (Michael) not only immigrated to Israel but also served in the Israeli army. He must have converted, since his mother was not only not Jewish, but was a daughter of an S.S. man."¹⁸

Mischling Hanns Rehfeld told Riggs:

"I have been discriminated against in my life for three things I could do nothing about. First, my Jewish relatives discriminated against me because I had a Christian mother (Schickse). Secondly, the Germans discriminated against me because I had a Jewish father. And (after the war), when I worked in the foreign service for many years, people discriminated against me because I was a German (i.e., I must be a Nazi.). – His father died in a Gestapo prison."¹⁹

"The legacy and the Nazi thinking continued to cloud many Mischlings views of Jews. Walter Schonewald "A Jew is only a religion; everything else is Hitler; everything else is racism. "Schonewald claimed that Israel has its own racial laws in that rabbinical courts prevent marriages between Jews and non-Jews and do not recognize the Reform or Conservative movements."²⁰

Riggs' footnotes noted that some orthodox Jews had welcomed the Nazi Nuremberg Laws as they prevented intermarriage and assimilation.

"Because of their experiences with some religious Jews, many Mischling blame Orthodox Jews for anti-Semitism. Quarter Jew Fritz Binder claimed that Orthodox Jews, by maintaining they are the only ones with have found the "truth" and that their "lifestyle is the best, are just as bad as the Nazis." Half-Jew Bergmann said, "The fact that the religious Jews pray each day and thank God that He did not make them gentiles is disgusting." Quarter Jew Horst von Oppenfeld, a descendant of the Jewish Oppenheim family, who was a captain and an adjutant to Stauffenberg, said that Orthodox Jews experience so many problems because they do not assimilate. "Their problem" he claims "is due to the fact that they want to be different. Consequently, many Mischling avoid contact with very religious Jews."²¹

Today, "many Mischling, especially in Vienna, refused to meet, stating that they had not discussed their past even with their own families and saw no reason to do so...Some still fear that people will reject them once they learn they are "partially" Jewish. For example, Rolf Zelter, whose 75 percent Jewish father Obergefreiter Joachim Zelter fought on the Russian front, found

out about his Jewish past after the war. When he confronted his mother, she quickly told him, "Don't let your children know. It can only cause them problems." For the Zelters, like many families documented in this study, Jewish ancestry should simply be concealed and forgotten."²²

Contemporary American Christian – Jewish intermarriage rates are near 50%. There are an estimated 400,000+ children living in households of mixed religious backgrounds. The numbers are estimated because, as was explained by the director of a major Northeastern United States Jewish Federation director, when asked how do you know how many Jews are there in your State, he said "we guesstimate."

"What do you mean – guesstimate?"

"If a household joins Federation and says they are Jewish we assume that both mother and father are Jewish."

"How do you know?"

"We don't. We don't ask."

The problem of Jewish identity in Israel is extremely murky, especially since 800,000 Russians immigrated in the 1990's and 2000's. Many of the Russian immigrants to Israel came because of Israel's Right of Return Law. With little doubt many of the Russian immigrants could not clearly and conclusively prove they were Jewish – being born of a Jewish mother. Many arrived only knowing, or claiming, that they had one grandparent that was Jewish. The resultant "don't ask, don't tell" policy has severely disrupted inter-Jewish relations in Israel. It has added significantly to present and future tensions for Jewish marriage, divorce and life cycle events such as death and burial which are controlled by the Orthodox Rabbinate.

Though the terrible tragedy happened more than ten years ago, the story still resonates within Israel today.

The debate over burials has gone on in Israel for years, picking up steam in the early 1990s with the wave of Soviet immigration. The Israel Religion Action Center estimates that 150,000 to 200,000 of the 700,000 new arrivals are not technically Jewish.

In 1992, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that cemetery lands should be allotted for people unwilling or unable to meet the requirements of the Orthodox burials. A Knesset bill last year made a similar directive.

Nevertheless, development of alternative cemeteries has been stalled by staunch resistance from the Orthodox rabbinate.

"The religious establishment is afraid that the stronghold of Orthodoxy will dissipate rapidly if alternatives are offered," said Rabbi Regev of the Religious Action Center. "They want to control everything that is Jewish."

A furor arose in 1993 over the burial of Lev Pisahov, an Israel army corporal killed by Hamas terrorists at a checkpoint. Initially buried outside a Jewish cemetery, his body was moved inside after then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin intervened. Last year, when a 19-month-old killed in a car accident was about to be buried in the town of Sderot, an Orthodox rabbi disrupted the funeral, demanding that the grave be dug outside the cemetery because the boy's mother was not Jewish."²³

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[1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqWI4ZYPcE&feature=related) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqWI4ZYPcE&feature=related>

[2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_Goldberg) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_Goldberg

[3](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/hitler.html) <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/hitler.html>

[4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mein_Kampf) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mein_Kampf

[5](#) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers, the Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military. Bryan Mark Rigg, U. of Kansas, 2002, Lawrence, Ks. Pg. 28

[6](http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007695) <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007695>

[7](#) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers, the Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military. Bryan Mark Rigg, U. of Kansas, 2002, Lawrence, Ks. Pgs. 20-22

[8](#) Ibid pg. 23

[9](#) Ibid pg. 42

[10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knight's_Cross_of_the_Iron_Cross) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knight's_Cross_of_the_Iron_Cross

[11](#) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers, the Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military. Bryan Mark Rigg, U. of Kansas, 2002, Lawrence, Ks. Pgs. 38-39

[12](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erhard_Milch) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erhard_Milch

[13](#) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers, the Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military. Bryan Mark Rigg, U. of Kansas, 2002, Lawrence, Ks.

[14](#) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers, the Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military. Bryan Mark Rigg, U. of Kansas, 2002, Lawrence, Ks. Pg. 31

[15](#) Ibid pg. 32

[16](#) Ibid pg. 34

[17](#) Ibid pg. 36

[18](#) Ibid Pg. 47

[19](#) Ibid Pg. 35

[20](#) Ibid Pg. 48

[21](#) Ibid Pg. 48

[22](#) Ibid Pg. 49

[23](http://articles.philly.com/1997-08-06/news/25566949_1_jewish-cemeteries-rabbi-uri-regev-givat-shaul/3) http://articles.philly.com/1997-08-06/news/25566949_1_jewish-cemeteries-rabbi-uri-regev-givat-shaul/3