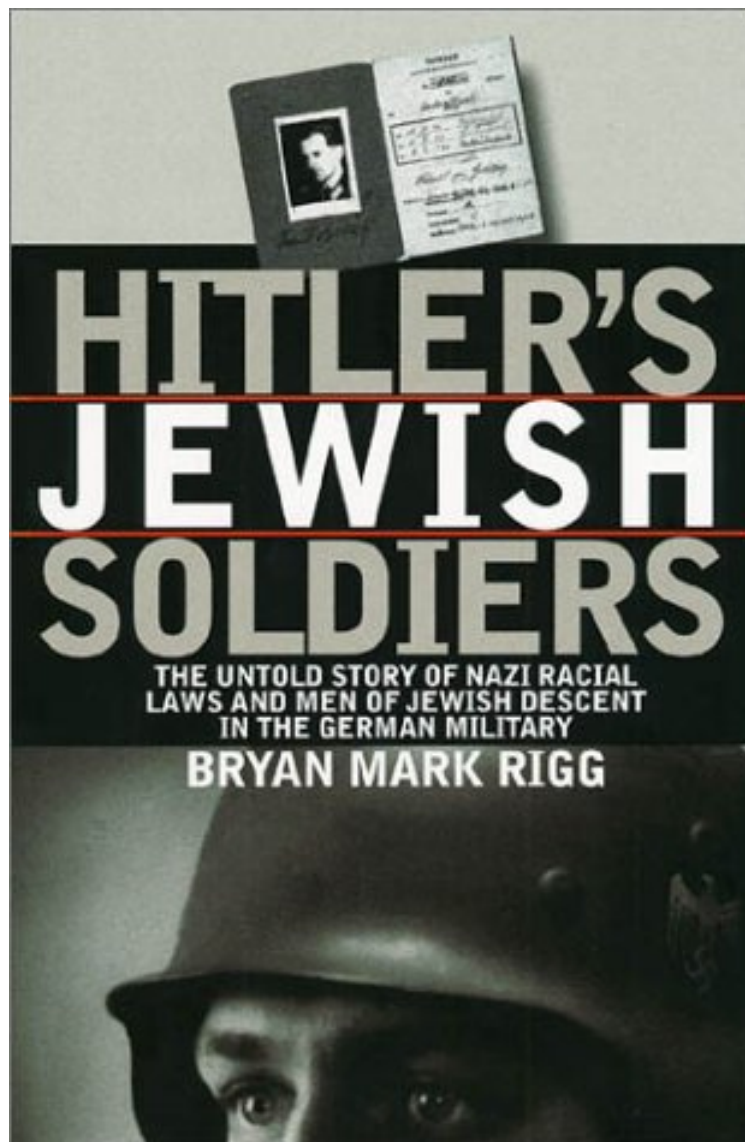


(Free pdf) Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military

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Bryan Mark Rigg

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Bryan Mark Rigg : Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Scholarship and objectivity demonstrating the inhuman quandary that Mischling faced in an inhuman culture. By Peter S. Bradley. *Hitlers Jewish Soldiers*. By Bryan Mark Rigg. This is an extremely well-done book. We can clearly see how this book might be political dynamite in our PC-obsessed culture. The risk of this book is that this very important unearthing of a part of the Holocaust that normally doesn't get discussed will be seized by the fever-swamp to imply that the Jews were, somehow, responsible for their own predicament. Rigg avoids this by extensive scholarship, academic objectivity and showing the inhuman quandary that Mischling Germans with a Jewish parent or one or two Jewish grandparents found themselves in because of the inhuman system of National Socialist racism. The problem that the National Socialists found themselves in upon seizing power was determining who were the Jews? Clearly, Germans who were religiously Jewish were Jews, but were Germans who had converted from Judaism? How about people who had a parent, or a grandparent, who had converted from Judaism? Was someone who was Christian and whose parents were Christians but had a Christian grandparent who had married a convert to Christianity from Judaism a Jew? What about those people in that situation who had no idea of their grandparents' conversion? Were they Jewish? The Nazi answer about Germans who had converted from Judaism was that they remained racially Jewish. This represented a substantial departure from historic Christianity, which treated converts as equally Christian as non-converts. But the question of such a person's descendants was more difficult and the policy treatment of such persons changed over the course of the Third Reich. Rigg opens his book with an in-depth bit of analysis into the question of the size of the Mischling population. The answer is not precise, but the general conclusion is a whole bunch. Here is Rigg's conclusion: One does not know how many full Jews served. If the ratio of 97 full Jews for every 967 half-Jews can be applied from the data collected for this study, and given the estimate that 60,000 half-Jewish soldiers served, then one could assume that at least 6,019 full Jews also served in the Wehrmacht. The numbers presented here are insignificant relative to the Wehrmacht's size, but are startling in light of the Holocaust. The idea that at least 150,000 men of Jewish ancestry served in the Wehrmacht is hard to accept. Nevertheless, the evidence strongly suggests that was the case. (p. 65.) This may be the least interesting conclusion of the book... but gosh! Rigg reaches his conclusion from intermarriage trends, which resulted in the estimate that quarter Jews were twice as plentiful as half Jews, putting their numbers at 140,000. (p. 64.) This is a sizable number, but it must be kept in mind that 17 million served in the Wehrmacht, making the Mischling component less than 1% of the total manpower of the Wehrmacht. (p. 64.) The Nazis tended to distinguish between full Jews and Mischling, but, nonetheless, discriminated against Mischling. The Nazi concern, in part, was that treating Mischling like full Jews would be demoralizing to Non-Jewish Germans, aka Aryan Germans, who would see their relatives being persecuted by the State. (Concern about demoralizing Mischling soldiers was not something that mattered to the National Socialists.) As a result, while there was persecution of Mischling, the persecution was less than that directed at full Jews. Thus, Mischling could serve in the military, but they could not hope to advance beyond a low-level non-commissioned officer position. Also, periodically during the war, after the victory in Poland, the Party issued orders requiring the discharge of Mischling from the military, which order was countermanded when manpower was needed. It seems that a quite a number of Mischling were able to survive the Holocaust by virtue of being in the Wehrmacht and riding out the changes in policy with the help of officers who needed trained soldiers or were uninterested in Nazi racial fanaticism. The depth of racial fanaticism is demonstrated by the long discussion in this book about how Hitler personally undertook to review every exemption provided to any Mischling from the Nazi racial classification system. The system provided some flexibility for Mischling who had proven their bravery on the battlefield. Exception or connected or lucky soldiers as well as civilians were able to obtain a *Deutschblutigkeitserkennung* which declared them *de jure* Aryans. Others were able to acquire a *Genehmigung* an exemption that permitted them to remain in the Wehrmacht with the promise that their Aryan status would be determined after the war. The system was complex and convoluted and involved investigations of families and photos, ruling out candidates that looked too Jewish. (A similar system was put in place for mixed Aryan-Jewish marriages.) At the end of the line, Hitler's approval was required, such that no matter how the war was going, he would spend a few hours a day pondering photos to determine exemptions. (He would also eventually decree that exemptions would only be given to those who had demonstrated dedication to the Nazi Party.) The idea of Jewish Nazi Party members can cause an even more severe moment of cognitive dissonance, but this underscores a major subtext of the book; being a Jew didn't mean to the Third Reich what it means to us. I suspect that most people thought of Jews as those guys religiously and culturally Jewish, not one of us an assimilated Christian. Many of the Jews had had no contact with Judaism for generations; they were Protestant or Christian for generations, and they might never have known that Grandma Sophie had converted when she got married in 1872. The Nazi true-believer Heydrich, Jules Streicher and others though had a fully worked out theory of Jewish contamination that extended to the Aryan wives of German men. Quarter Jews and Half-Jews soon found themselves in a legal limbo. On the other hand, there were Mischling Germans who knew that their parents, grandparents or relatives were Jewish in the classic sense. This book is filled with the unimaginably tragic stories of Mischling soldiers who would return home on leave to find out that a father or mother had been deported. There are stories about how Mischling Wehrmacht soldiers would go to Dachau to visit a father or mother; in one story, such a soldier obtained the promise of a camp commandant that so long as his father

remained well-behaved and kept his boots shined, he would look out for him. These Mischlinge found themselves risking their lives for a country that they knew was murdering their family members and discriminating against them, but they lacked any feasible option, and many honestly loved their country. They also knew that they might well be the next victims. As the war continued, the contest between the Nazi radicals and the Interior Department, including Bernhard Losener who Riggs depicts as something of a hero of the Mischling cause (p. 271-272) moved in the direction of the radicals, with the direction of persecution heading toward treating half-Jews and then quarter-Jews as full Jews, with all attendant consequences. Riggs opines that if Hitler had won the war, the Mischling populations would have been murdered. Riggs has a fascinating final chapter about what the Mischlinge might have known about the Holocaust. The answer is that to a man they claimed that they didn't know about the Holocaust. They knew that their relatives were being murdered; some had actually witnessed the mass murder of Jews; some had been to Auschwitz; but they didn't put together the pieces they knew into a conclusion about the Holocaust. Riggs writes: From the evidence, one would think that most Germans should have been aware of what today is called the Holocaust. This assertion applies even more to the Mischlinge who had opportunities to find out about the Holocaust. But most refused to believe or failed to assess the incriminating evidence they heard about or witnessed. Although many doubted the accuracy of the death certificates of relatives that stated they had died of natural causes in the camps, they did not believe their relatives had been systematically murdered. Many could not understand why the people they had grown up with would want to kill them or their families. Deported Jews often led their Mischling relatives to believe that their deportation was not serious. When Harald Ettheimer's aunt left for her deportation, she told him not to worry because she would soon return. Since the victims themselves, according to Holocaust historian Lucy Davidowicz, alleged that it was beyond their imagination that they would be gassed and killed, one should not expect ordinary Germans to do much more. Steinberg wrote, Holocaust records show that Jews themselves often refused to believe what was happening in spite of the evidence of their own eyes. Another Holocaust historian, Leni Yahil, claimed that systematic murder was beyond anyone's imagination. Marian Kaplan wrote, But a far more effective barrier to their comprehension was the sheer inconceivability of the genocide. Even those who received information frequently reacted with disbelief or repressed it. If Jews did not believe what was happening to them, it follows that most Mischlinge also could not believe the Holocaust was happening, because they had less direct exposure to persecution. Almost all the interviews conducted for this book support this conclusion. The average German who had even less contact with those who were persecuted, was highly unlikely to suspect the extent of the Holocaust. (p. 265.) Riggs offers many examples of this failure to comprehend: Hans Schmechel, who lost both grandparents, Emma and Wilhelm Gotha, at Theresienstadt, manned a flak gun in 1944 while the Nazis deported his brothers, Horst and Heinz, to an OT forced labor camp. They found it quite ironic that two of them had to perform forced labor in an OT camp while the other served in the Luftwaffe. Schmechel's family had only heard about the atrocities when his Aryan uncle, Walter Schmechel, a guard at Auschwitz, came home in 1943 and reported what he had seen. The family believed the uncle but still did not know that systematic extermination of millions was under way. An even more bizarre case was that of Horst Reinhard's family. While Reinhard served with false papers to make the authorities think he was a quarter-Jew, his father was forced to serve as an army staff sergeant in the SS guard unit at the concentration camp Flossenbürg. Reinhard's Jewish mother, Marie, even lived with her husband in the camp's staff housing and thus survived. Reinhard said that although he wrote letters to his parents at the camp, he did not know about the Holocaust until the 1950s. He knew about deportations but, like most other Germans, never thought the Jews were being systematically murdered. The Schmechel and Reinhard families had more information than most families, but they still failed to either understand or believe the signs they received. (p. 253-254.) There is a fascinating insight in this about how knowledge may be a communal activity; we know things when we discuss our different perspectives and reach conclusions. The ability to take counsel with others as St. Thomas Aquinas would put it was denied by the totalitarian Nazi society. A final interesting feature of Nazi racism is the appeal to the relatively modern science of genetics. I have recently watched the Kenneth Branagh movie *Conspiracy* about the Wannsee Conference. There is a scene where Stuckart, played by Colin Firth, is advocating to sterilize Mischlinge and does a brief speech about Mendel's laws. Nazis used Mendel's name as a verb to describe genetic expression between mixed breeds. (p. 320, fn. 180.) My appreciation for that movie, and my understanding of the issues these Nazi characters were discussing, Riggs writes: The racial theorist Dr. Achim Gercke in the RMI introduced another argument when he wrote in September 1935 that Mischlinge could really be disguised Jews. Anyone who mathematically defined 50 percent, 25 percent, 12 percent, 6.25 percent, etc., Mischlinge had not understood Mendel's laws of genetics, Gercke maintained. Gercke warned that Mischlinge could also Mendel out pure Jews. (p. 96.) Hitler followed this genetic approach: As the war worsened, Hitler became less generous with his exemptions. He told General Jodl during an afternoon tea session on 10 May 1942 that he regretted giving exemptions to so many half-Jewish soldiers. For experience showed, Hitler said, that from these Jewish offsprings, four, five or six generations of pure Jews keep Mendel's laws out. (p. 219 citing Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier, 1941-1942*.) (Sidenote: Riggs' sources are encyclopedic and deep.) On 2 July, Bormann wrote Böhler complaining that Böhler had continued to send applications to Hitler that did not meet the criteria. Bormann explained that Hitler had expressed his indignation at the handling of Mischlinge

cases. He explained that only men who had performed special service to the Party during the Kampfzeit should be considered. Party membership alone was not enough. Hitler warned that if they were not careful, the Mischlinge would create a new Jewish race. One needed to exercise caution, Hitler had told Bormann, because it had been proven that Mischlinge always Mended out Jews. Hitler pointed to Cripps and Roosevelt to support his claim. (p. 223.) My take-away on this is that the facile assumption that Nazi anti-Semitism was simply Christian anti-Semitism ignores the injection of the new science. This book is full of surprises, perhaps, because we have a model of what we think Nazi anti-Semitism must have been like. Adding the details of the treatment of the Mischlinge corrects what has become a more or less politically correct morality tale. The actual facts are more nuanced, and less about either/or either Germans knew about the Holocaust or they are lying and either the victims were Jews or they were not. And that leads to some fascinating observations about humanity and human behavior.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The definitive work on the subject By Lee Mandel This is a scholarly, well researched book on a little known aspect of World War II: Germans with Jewish blood (Mischling) who fought for Hitler's Third Reich. The author conducted numerous interviews that allow the reader to get into the mindsets of people who were caught in the nexus between religion and nationality in a country where the two didn't mix if the religion was Judaism. Whatever their motives, whether it was an attempt to protect family members, or because they were loyal Germans above all, the Mischling had to submit paperwork to request their Aryan status and it could only be granted with the personal approval of Hitler himself, even in the final days of the war as the Third Reich was crumbling. Bryan Mark Rigg has written a book that is detailed, fascinating, highly readable, and will likely remain the definitive work on the subject.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A very good book to learn about our present circumstances as well By Thomas A Nagy This book was a real eye-opener, no pun intended. It was a revelation for me. There is so much we don't know about the rise and fall of the Third Reich that it will take a century to catch up. It appears that history is best viewed from the distance of time. I see a parallel with today's events: those who mean well are easily drawn into concepts and ideals that appear to be "for the greater good," yet are truly not. Those who served the Reich, so many unwillingly but without a viable alternative, often did so without comprehending the true aims of the Party. Just as we live in complex times today, and the nominal "war on terror" is far more than the common person knows, so it was also in the period of 1933-1945 and beyond. There was much more to the Nazi agenda than anti-communism and antisemitism, and it will take a long time and much scholarship to sort these matters out. This book, like others on the period, keep bringing me back to the present because of the comparable circumstances.

On the murderous road to "racial purity" Hitler encountered unexpected detours, largely due to his own crazed views and inconsistent policies regarding Jewish identity. After centuries of Jewish assimilation and intermarriage in German society, he discovered that eliminating Jews from the rest of the population was more difficult than he'd anticipated. As Bryan Rigg shows in this provocative new study, nowhere was that heinous process more fraught with contradiction and confusion than in the German military. Contrary to conventional views, Rigg reveals that a startlingly large number of German military men were classified by the Nazis as Jews or "partial-Jews" (Mischlinge), in the wake of racial laws first enacted in the mid-1930s. Rigg demonstrates that the actual number was much higher than previously thought—perhaps as many as 150,000 men, including decorated veterans and high-ranking officers, even generals and admirals. As Rigg fully documents for the first time, a great many of these men did not even consider themselves Jewish and had embraced the military as a way of life and as devoted patriots eager to serve a revived German nation. In turn, they had been embraced by the Wehrmacht, which prior to Hitler had given little thought to the "race" of these men but which was now forced to look deeply into the ancestry of its soldiers. The process of investigation and removal, however, was marred by a highly inconsistent application of Nazi law. Numerous "exemptions" were made in order to allow a soldier to stay within the ranks or to spare a soldier's parent, spouse, or other relative from incarceration or far worse. (Hitler's own signature can be found on many of these "exemption" orders.) But as the war dragged on, Nazi politics came to trump military logic, even in the face of the Wehrmacht's growing manpower needs, closing legal loopholes and making it virtually impossible for these soldiers to escape the fate of millions of other victims of the Third Reich. Based on a deep and wide-ranging research in archival and secondary sources, as well as extensive interviews with more than four hundred Mischlinge and their relatives, Rigg's study breaks truly new ground in a crowded field and shows from yet another angle the extremely flawed, dishonest, demeaning, and tragic essence of Hitler's rule.

.com Working in newly opened archives and reexamining old evidence, historian Bryan Mark Rigg turns up a surprising wrinkle in the history of Nazi Germany: the presence of part-Jewish soldiers not only in the ranks but also in the upper echelons of the German military. One such soldier recalled, "I served because I wanted to prove Hitler's racial nonsense wrong. I wanted to prove that people of Jewish descent were indeed brave and courageous soldiers." By Rigg's estimate, as many as 150,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen of partial Jewish descent (Mischlinge, in Nazi terminology) served in Adolf Hitler's forces—some, such as field marshal and war criminal Erhard Milch, placed in high positions by Hitler himself even as he tightened the noose on the Jews of Europe. Rigg considers the role of these

men as they negotiated the confusion of the monolithic, racist state in dealing with Germans of partial Jewish descent. "[Their] experience clearly demonstrates the complexity of life in the Third Reich," writes Rigg. His book sheds light on a difficult subject in the face of certain controversy, and it merits discussion. --Gregory McNamee From Publishers Weekly

What the Nazis called partial Jews, or *mischlinge*, served in the Wehrmacht during World War II, often joining to prove their loyalty and becoming decorated soldiers. Rigg, who received a B.A. from Yale in 1996, studied at Cambridge and currently teaches at the online American Military University, estimates their numbers to have been in the range of 150,000. He begins by carefully describing Nazi racial law and recounting the assimilation and military service of "1/2 Jews" (among other categories) in the German and Austrian states in the two centuries before WWI. Moving on to the Nazi era, Rigg details the exemptions to Aryan law that allowed *mischlinge* to serve. The extent to which the *mischlinge* knew of the regime's true character is a constant theme, and feelings of helplessness in the face of knowledge of the Holocaust are vividly illustrated with numerous examples, such as the *mischling* soldier who visited Jewish relatives the night before they were deported to an extermination camp not knowing then that "deportation" meant "death." Interviews with some surviving *mischlinge* (including former chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who served in the Luftwaffe), along with quotations from memoirs and diaries, help to enliven an otherwise dry, academic style. By 1944, many of the loopholes in the racial purity laws were closed, and many military *mischlinge* perished in the camps. Those who survived were later often rejected by the Jewish community because of their service in the German armed forces. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "Riggs bracing and unintimidated study lays bare the contradiction, confusion and expedience that governed *Mischlinge* policy and the maiming cost to those whose lives were burdened by anxiety, guilt and collusion. In the end we must be grateful for his book, a penetrating light cast on some of the murkier corners of the human psyche." Michael Skakun, *Aufbau*

Rigg has opened brand new territory for historians and students of war, offering new insight into the Nazi mentality on race. "World War II Magazine" Through videotaped interviews, painstaking attention to personnel files, and banal documents not normally consulted by historians, and spurred by a keen sense of personal mission, Rigg has turned up an unexplored and confounding chapter in the history of the Holocaust. The extent of his findings has surprised scholars. "Warren Hoge, New York Times