

SATURDAY, 28 APRIL 2007

# **150 000 Jews in Hitler's Army**

## **This bit of history was hidden from us**

until researcher Bryan Mark Rigg (is a Jew!) recently uncovered

## **Hitler's Jewish Army**

**"Not every victim was a Jew but every Jew was a victim."** -Elie Wiesel speaking of World War II.

**"If there were Jews in (Hitler's) armed forces...who served knowing what was going on and made no attempt to save (lives), well then that is unacceptable and dishonorable."** -Rabbi Marvin Hier, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Institute.

**Thousands of men of Jewish descent and hundreds of what the Nazis called 'full Jews' served in the German military with Adolf Hitler's knowledge and approval.**

Cambridge University researcher Bryan Rigg has traced the Jewish ancestry of more than 1,200 of Hitler's soldiers, including

**Two field marshals**

**Fifteen generals**

**Two full generals,**

**Eight lieutenant generals,**

**Five major generals,** "commanding up to 100,000 troops."

**In approximately 20 cases, Jewish soldiers in the Nazi army were awarded Germany's highest military honor, the Knight's Cross.**

**One of these Jewish veterans is today an 82 year old resident of northern Germany, an observant Jew who served as a captain and practiced his religion within the Wehrmacht throughout the war.**

**One of the Jewish field marshals was Erhard Milch, deputy to Luftwaffe Chief Hermann Goering. Rumors of Milch's Jewish identity circulated widely in Germany in the 1930s.**

**In one of the famous anecdotes of the time, Goering falsified Milch's birth record and when met with protests about having a Jew in the**

**Nazi high command, Goering replied, ``I decide who is a Jew and who is an Aryan.''**

**Rigg's research also shed light on stories surrounding the rescue by German soldiers of the Lubavitcher grand rabbi of that time, who was in Warsaw when the war broke out in 1939.**

**Joseph Isaac Schneerson was spirited to safety after an appeal to Germany from the United States. Schneerson was assisted by a German officer Rigg has identified as the highly decorated Maj. Ernst Bloch, whose father was a Jew.**

**Jews also served in the Nazi police and security forces as ghetto police (*Ordnungsdienst*) and concentration camp guards (*kapos*).**

**So what happens to the claim that Hitler sought to exterminate all Jews, when he allowed some of them to join in his struggle against Bolshevism and International finance capitalism?**

**"If the Jews were permitted to serve in Hitler's armed forces then there could not have been a Holocaust."**

**During World War II thousands of Jews served in the Wehrmacht, many awarded the Cross for Bravery. Jews serving in the SS. Were they also in the Gestapo? As 'Gestapo' is an abbreviation of "Geheime Stadt Polizei", meaning State Secret Police,**

Sources:

William D. Montalbano, "The Jews in Hitler's Military," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 24, 1996.

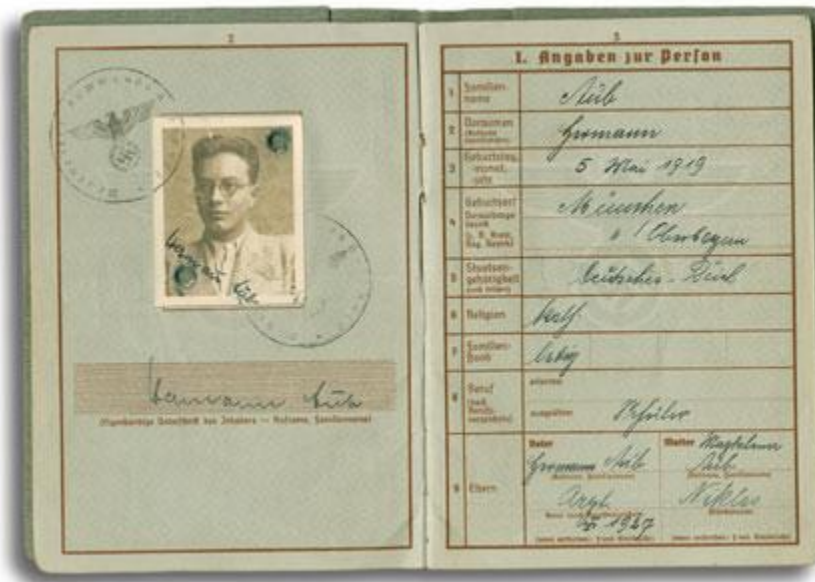
Tom Tugend, "Grad student uncovers Jews who fought for Adolf Hitler," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, Dec. 26, 1996.

Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*.

## **Hitler's Jewish Soldiers**

### **The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military**

**Bryan Mark Rigg**



Military service book of "half-Jew" Hermann Aub



Soldiers taking the oath of allegiance to Hitler



"Half-Jew" Horst Geitner was awarded both the Iron Cross Second Class and the Silver Wound Badge.



This photo of "half-Jew" Werner Goldberg, who was blond and blue-eyed, was used by a Nazi propaganda newspaper for its title page. Its caption: "The Ideal German Soldier."



"Half-Jew" Commander Paul Ascher, Admiral Lütjens's first staff officer on the battleship *Bismarck*; Ascher received Hitler's *Deutschblütigkeitserklärung*. (Military awards: EKI, EKII, and War Service Cross Second Class.)



"Quarter-Jew" Admiral Bernhard Rogge wearing the Ritterkreuz; he received Hitler's *Deutschblütigkeitserklärung*. (Military awards: oak leaves to Ritterkreuz, Ritterkreuz, samurai sword from the emperor of Japan, EKI, and EKII.)



"Half-Jew" Johannes  
Zukertort (last rank general)  
received Hitler's  
*Deutschblütigkeitserklärung*.



"Half-Jew" Colonel Walter H.  
Hollaender, decorated with  
the Ritterkreuz and German-  
Cross in Gold; he received  
Hitler's  
*Deutschblütigkeitserklärung*.  
(Military awards: Ritterkreuz,  
German-Cross in Gold, EK I,  
EK II, and Close Combat  
Badge.)



"Half-Jew" and later Luftwaffe General Helmut Wilberg; Hitler declared him Aryan in 1935. (Military awards: Hohenzollern's Knight's Cross with Swords, EK I, EK II.)



"Half-Jew" and field-marshal Erhard Milch (left) with General Wolfram von Richthofen. Hitler declared Milch Aryan. He was awarded the



Ritterkreuz for his performance during the campaign in Norway in 1940.



General Gotthard Heinrici, who was married to a "half-Jew," meeting Hitler in 1937.

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.



Side and front photographs of "half-Jew" Anton Mayer, similar to those that often accompanied a *Mischling's* application for exemption.



**As featured on NBC-TV's Dateline  
(first aired Sunday, June 9, 2002)**

**WINNER OF THE 2003 COLBY AWARD  
William E. Colby Military Writers Symposium**

<http://www.kansaspress.ku.edu/rightit.html>

## **As Many As 150,000 Jews Served In Hitler's Military**

(Reuters) -- As many as 150,000 men of Jewish descent served in the German military under Adolf Hitler, some with the Nazi leader's explicit consent, according to a U.S. historian who has interviewed hundreds of former soldiers.

Bryan Mark Rigg, history professor at the American Military University in Virginia, told Reuters on Thursday that the issue of soldiers of partial Jewish descent was long a somewhat taboo subject, overlooked by most academics as it threw up thorny questions.

"Not everybody who wore a uniform was a Nazi and not every person of Jewish descent was persecuted," he said. "Where do they belong? They served in the military but lost mum at Auschwitz."

According to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews or those of partial Jewish descent were unfit for military service, but Rigg tracked down and interviewed more than 400 former soldiers of partial Jewish descent -- labelled "Mischlinge" ("half-caste") by the Nazis.

He estimates there were about 60,000 soldiers with one Jewish parent and 90,000 with a Jewish grandparent in the Wehrmacht, the regular army as distinct from the Nazi SS.

"They thought 'if I serve well they're not going to hurt me and not going to hurt my family'," he said.

However, on returning home from the campaign in Poland at the start of the war to find persecution of their families worsening, many soldiers classified as half-Jewish started to complain, prompting Hitler to order their dismissal in 1940.

But many of these so-called half-Jewish soldiers continued to serve, sometimes due to delays in the discharge order reaching the front, because they concealed their background or because they applied and won clemency for good service.

Many senior officers with Jewish ancestry won special permission to serve from Hitler himself.

"History is not so black and white. History about Mischlinge shows how bankrupt the Nazi racial laws were," said Rigg.

## SENSITIVE SUBJECT

While Germany has long been aware of men serving as soldiers who Nazi race laws should have classified as Jewish, most notably former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, Rigg's large estimate has surprised many.

Die Welt daily called Rigg's book "Hitler's Jewish Soldiers" "one of the most important Holocaust studies of recent years". The author was in Berlin to launch the German language version.

"The Mischlinge suffered the same fate in academic life as they did in real life. There was nobody to speak for them," Rigg said. "People thought it could be misinterpreted, it would be like saying: 'look they did it to themselves'."

Rigg, who has served in the U.S. Marines and as a volunteer in the Israeli army, was moved to research the subject after he discovered his own Jewish ancestry while probing his family tree and after a chance meeting with a Jewish Wehrmacht veteran.

Many of his subjects were telling their story for the first time and in some cases their families knew nothing of their Jewish heritage. "They would talk their hearts out, telling me all about this schizophrenic story they went through," he said.

He is convinced that most of the soldiers of Jewish decent were not aware of the Nazis' systematic murder of Jews, noting that most half-Jews reported to deportation stations in 1944.

"Most say they do not feel guilty about serving in the military, they feel guilty about what they didn't do to save their relatives," he said.

**PETER EPHROSS**  
**Jewish Telegraphic Agency**

In the summer of 1992, Bryan Mark Rigg, then a student at Yale, was in Germany researching his family history when he attended a screening of "Europa, Europa."

Since his German wasn't so good, he asked an elderly man sitting next to him to translate the film, which tells the story of Shlomo Perel, a Jew who survived the Holocaust by falsifying his identity - and who served in the German army for part of World War II.



"Half-Jew" and field-marshal Erhard Milch, left, stands with Gen. Wolfam von Richthofen. Hitler declared Milch an Aryan.

*Photo courtesy of University of Kansas*

After the movie, the man told Rigg that his story was similar to Perel's. Over a drink, the man told Rigg about his experiences as a "quarter-Jew" who had served for Germany on the Russian front.

The conversation fascinated Rigg and spurred him to investigate whether there were more soldiers of Jewish descent in the Nazi army.

He began checking - and sure enough, there were.

What's more, little scholarly work had been done on these mischlinge, as the Nazis called Germans with Jewish roots.

"They suffered the same fate in academic life that they did in the Third Reich. Nobody wanted them. Nobody claimed them. So nobody knows about them," Rigg, 31, told JTA recently.

The encounter launched a 10-year odyssey for Rigg that culminated in "Hitler's Jewish Soldiers," which is making waves in both the media and academia.

The Chronicle of Higher Education printed a lengthy article on Rigg and his book, and he appeared on a segment on NBC's "Dateline" last month, titled "Hiding in Plain Sight."

In the book, Rigg tells the strange-but-true story of these wartime German soldiers with Jewish roots.

Based on interviews with more than 400 of these former soldiers, along with some statistical extrapolation, Rigg concluded that more than 100,000 such soldiers - who were considered Jewish, according to Nazi racial laws - served in the German military.

Many researchers consider this number an exaggeration and dismiss Rigg, who teaches at the online American Military University, as publicity-hungry.

"This is not a bombshell," Raul Hilberg, one of the deans of Holocaust scholarship, recently told The Chronicle of Higher Education. "We have known that there were thousands" of men with Jewish roots "in the German army."

Some also have taken aim at the book's title. After all, Rigg himself says that only 60 percent of the "half-Jews" and only 30 percent of the "quarter-Jews" who served as soldiers were Jewish according to Jewish law.

Many didn't even know they were Jewish because their families had assimilated.

But many scholars support Rigg in his contention that his book, based on his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University in England, casts

new light on Nazi policy and the Holocaust.

Rigg's "diligent" and "sustained" research calls into question some previous assumptions about Nazi policy during the Holocaust, Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum told JTA. Rigg's book "shows that there was a greater degree of flexibility in the anti-Jewish policy than previously realized," says Berenbaum, author of "The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust."

Berenbaum highlights the importance of Rigg's evidence showing that, as late as 1943, Hitler was spending his time pondering the fate of individual soldiers with Jewish roots.

While the German war machine was focused on battling allied forces, Hitler was "deciding whether this guy's face is Jewish. It's unbelievable," Berenbaum says.

Rigg admits that it's a bit unbelievable that he became a Holocaust scholar.

"Ten years ago, if you had asked me that this was going to happen, that we'd be sitting here talking about this, I'd be like, 'No way.' "

Tall, fit and square-jawed - and prone to use the words "honored" and "gentlemanly" in conversation - Rigg looks more like a former football player and Marine from Texas - which, in fact, he is.

As a teen-ager, Rigg attended the Fort Worth Christian Academy and spent time on Protestant missions.

While researching his family history that summer in 1992, Rigg found some records indicating that many of his mother's ancestors were Jewish.

"I have some ancestors who were running around in skirts in Northern Scotland hacking up each other. That's part of my tradition as well. I also have some tradition going to the Temple Mount," he says.

But it wasn't just his Christian upbringing that made him an unlikely candidate for research into the Holocaust. Throughout his research, he spoke to many scholars who dissuaded him from his work.

He was told that the subject matter was either too tangential or would cause problems for Jews, Rigg recalls, but he turned the criticism into a

challenge.

It wasn't his first academic obstacle: As a young child, he failed first grade twice. Only when he was placed into a university-affiliated school did he begin to flourish.

After high school, he was rejected from the Ivy League schools he had dreamed of attending. So he spent a fifth year of high school studying and playing football at an East Coast private school, and then was accepted at Yale.

Even today, Rigg appears to be motivated by the discouragement he says he received from some scholars.

At a lecture last month at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, Rigg says some scholars "exuded an air of academic arrogance that irritated me." In an interview with JTA, he discussed his time spent in "the bowels of the academic establishment."

Armed with this motivation, as well as some encouragement from his family and from scholars such as Jonathan Steinberg, his doctoral adviser at Cambridge, Rigg persevered.

After spending time with some of the soldiers, Rigg felt he owed something to them - and to what he calls truth, which he uses without an ounce of irony.

Rigg himself contributed to "personal truth" - "outing" some of these soldiers' Jewish roots to their own families.

Some of the soldiers Rigg learned about became interested in their Judaism after the war, but others died without telling anyone - and Rigg was the one to inform their families.

Even if many of his subjects didn't consider themselves Jewish, their experiences during the war highlight a gray spot in the world of the Holocaust, Rigg says.

"Are they perpetrators or are they victims? Do they share the guilt or do they share the victimhood?" he asks. "They're between two stools all the time."

So is Rigg, in many ways. Raised a fundamentalist Protestant, he studied at the Ohr Sameach Yeshiva in Jerusalem while conducting his

research, and says he now professes that he believes in no specific religion beyond general "tolerance."

His time at a yeshiva was just one of the turns Rigg's life has taken during the last decade. He also spent time in a program the Israeli Army runs for volunteers from abroad, and even did a stint in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1999 to 2001.

But, he says, he made a commitment to his subjects to tell their story. He has done that both through his book and through an archive in the German city of Freiburg that he has filled with the fruits of his research.

"Now I've honored that commitment and I can walk away after all this is done, and be happy," he says.

<http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/020705/army.shtml>

Hitler's Jewish Soldiers - Perhaps  
150,000 Jews Fought Valiantly  
The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws  
and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military  
By Bryan Mark Rigg  
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To be featured on NBC-TV's Dateline in June 2002

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 Mark 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.

Side and front photographs of "half-Jew" Anton Mayer, similar to those that often accompanied a Mischling's application for exemption. To see more photographs from the book, [click here](#) "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 "The revelation that Germans of Jewish blood, knowing the Nazi regime for what it was, served Hitler as uniformed members of his armed forces must come as a profound shock. It will surprise even professional historians of the Nazi years." --John Keegan, author of *The Face of Battle* and *The Second World War* "Startling and unexpected, Rigg's study conclusively demonstrates the degree of flexibility in German policy toward the Mischlinge, the extent of Hitler's involvement, and, most importantly, that not all who served in the armed forces were anti-Semitic, even as their service aided the killing process."--Michael Berenbaum, author of *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust* "Rigg's extensive knowledge and the preliminary conclusions drawn from his research impressed me greatly. I firmly believe that his in-depth treatment of the subject of German soldiers of Jewish descent in the Wehrmacht will lead to new perspectives on this portion of 20th century German military history."--Helmut Schmidt, Former Chancellor of Germany "An impressively researched work with important implications for hotly debated questions. Rigg tells some exquisitely poignant stories of individual human experiences that complicate our picture of state and society in the Third Reich."--Nathan A. Stoltzfus, Florida State University, author of *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* "An impressive work filled with interesting stories. . . .

By helping us better understand Nazi racial policy at the margins--i.e., its impact on certain members of the German military--Rigg's study clarifies the central problems of Nazi Jewish policies overall."--Norman Naimark, Stanford University, author of *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* "An illuminating and provocative study that merits a wide readership and is sure to be much discussed."--Dennis E. Showalter, Colorado College, author of *Tannenberg: Clash of Empires* "An outstanding job of research and analysis. Rigg's book will add a great deal to our understanding of the German military, of the place of Jews and people of Jewish descent in the Nazi state, and of the Holocaust. It forces us to deal with the full, complex

range of possible actions and reactions by individuals caught up in the Nazi system."--Geoffrey P. Megargee, author of *Inside Hitler's High Command* "With the skill of a master detective, Bryan Rigg reveals the surprising and largely unknown story of Germans of Jewish origins in the Nazi military. His work contributes to our understanding of the complexity of faith and identity in the Third Reich."--Paula E. Hyman, Yale University, author of *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History and The Jews of Modern France* "A major piece of scholarship which traces the peculiar twists and turns of Nazi racial policy toward men in the Wehrmacht, often in the highest ranks, who had partly Jewish backgrounds. Rigg has uncovered personal stories and private archives which literally nobody knew existed.

His book will be an important contribution to German history."--Jonathan Steinberg, University of Pennsylvania, author of *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust 1941-1943* "An original, groundbreaking, and significant contribution to the history of the Wehrmacht and Nazi Germany."--James S. Corum, School of Advanced Air Power Studies, author of *The Roots of Blitzkrieg and The Luftwaffe* "Rigg's work has discovered new academic territory."--Manfred Messerschmidt, Freiburg University, author of *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat (The Wehrmacht in the Nazi State)* BRYAN MARK RIGG received his B.A. with honors in history from Yale University in 1996. Yale awarded him the Henry Fellowship for graduate study at Cambridge University, where he received his M.A. in 1997 and Ph.D. in 2002. Currently Professor of History at American Military University, he has served as a volunteer in the Israeli Army and as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. His research for this book has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *London Daily Telegraph*. The thousands of pages of documents and oral testimonies (8mm and VHS video) the author collected for this study have been purchased by the National Military Archive of Germany. The Bryan Mark Rigg Collection is housed in the Bundesarchiv-Militrarchiv in Freiburg, Germany. Click here to learn more about the author and his research experiences.

<http://www.kansaspress.ku.edu/rightit.html>

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