

The Problems the *Mischlinge* Presented the Nazis **By Walter S. Zapotoczny**

The word *Mischling* means "half-caste, mongrel or hybrid." In the 1920s, when French colonial soldiers had affairs with women in German territories they occupied, the children who resulted were called *Mischlinge*. Hitler believed that the Jews brought these French blacks to Germany to destroy the "White Race." The term became associated with any mixed race. Two years after seizing power, the Nazis implemented laws to separate *Mischlinge* from Aryans. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws created two new "racial" categories: the half-Jew (Jewish *Mischlinge* first degree), and the quarter-Jew (Jewish *Mischlinge* second degree).

Mischlinge, accordingly to Hitler, were the products of "unholy unions." Hitler claimed that *Mischlinge* "are the sad products of the irresistibly spreading contamination of our sexual life; the vices of the parents are revealed in the sickness of the children. Blood sin and desecration of the race are original sin in this world and the end of humanity which surrenders to it." The 1935 Nuremberg Laws defined the categories of *Mischlinge* according to the religion of a person's grandparents. Nazi scientists were unable to differentiate between Jewish and German blood. Left with no reliable "scientific" method for physically identifying *Mischlinge*, Nazi officials had to turn to church archives or local court records of evidence of a person's "race." Nazis were confused about *Mischlinge*, since they were both Jewish and German.

Most *Mischlinge* soon discovered that the Nazis took away their rights. The Nazis denied them citizenship in practice and they could not hold positions of authority. Many *Mischlinge* viewed themselves as German. Many tried to be considered as Aryans and labeled as normal. They knew that the Nazis scrutinized *Mischlinge* to determine whether the Aryan or Jewish side dominated. Consequently, most fought a constant battle to prove that their Aryan side had completely eclipsed their Jewish side. Their desire for acceptance took on a new twist when they entered the Wehrmacht. Many believed that the armed forces gave them an opportunity to prove their "Aryanhood." Most believed their meritorious service would convince their comrades and society to accept them as "normal." Hitler permitted many *Mischlinge* to serve in the military.

Throughout Hitler's political career, he made several exemptions from his ideology. Whatever Hitler had written into decrees was always subject to alteration at his discretion. Hitler granted thousands of *Mischlinge* exemptions from the provisions of his racial laws. Some have claimed that Hitler made exemptions for the *Mischlinge* because of his own "Jewish" past. Hitler feared his paternal grandfather was Jewish. As Dr. Fritz Redlich, psychiatrist and author of *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*, said, "Hitler was mixed up about his descent. He was definitely scared about the possibility that he had a Jewish grandfather." However, no documents have survived to confirm or deny this allegation.

For Adolf Hitler, the *Mischlinge* issue was of paramount importance. All potential approvals for a change in status had to be referred to Hitler, as were permits for *Mischlinge* to serve in the military, and for mixed marriages involving *Mischlinge*. Hitler exempted some 260 officers or their wives who were *Mischlinge* of the first degree; by 1942, some 340 Jews had been equalized with *Mischlinge* of the first degree; and by means of legal fiction; he also granted the status of half Jew to some 3,000 Jews. After the attempt on his life on July 20, 1944, Hitler ordered that civil servants who were *Mischlinge*, or who were married to Jews or *Mischlinge*, could no longer hold high governmental office, even if their partners had previously been equalized with "Aryans." This new regulation affected a wide range of people in important posts. The ferreting out of *Mischlinge* in the party ranks was much more thorough than demanded by state law, and expulsions from the Nazi party embraced *Mischlinge* even up to the fifth degree. Hitler also issued general instructions that the offspring of political leaders were not to marry *Mischlinge*, even if the latter had received equal status with Germans.

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