

The Mischlinge

By Walter S. Zapotoczny

The Nuremberg Laws enacted on 15 September 1935 in Germany marked a major step in clarifying racial policy and removing Jewish influences from Aryan society. In September 1935, Adolf Hitler decided that the time was ripe for more restrictions on Germany's Jews. He outlined new laws for the protection of German blood and honor. On 13 September 1935, he called on Bernard Losener in the Reich Ministry of the Interior (RMI) and others, among them state secretaries Hans Pfundtner and Dr. William Stuckart, to formulate the legal language. The laws, approved by Hitler personally, deprived Jews of citizenship, prohibited Jewish households from having German maids, and outlawed sexual relations between Jews and Germans. The laws also prohibited marriages between Jews and Germans but failed to specify who counted as a Jew. Years of German-Jewish assimilation made this a difficult question to answer. The debate raged for the next several months. Hitler wavered between declaring the *Mischlinge* (half-Jews) the same as Jews or keeping them separate as half-Jews. Nazi hard-liners thought the laws were too lenient. Dr. Gerhard Wagner, Reichsarztchef (Reich doctors' leader) and a fanatical anti-Semite, had many talks with Hitler during the drafting of the racial laws. He wanted to equate all half-, quarter-, and even one-eighth Jews with full Jews. The racial theorist Dr. Achim Gercke introduced another argument when he wrote in September 1935 that *Mischlinge* could really be disguised Jews. At this time, Hitler refused to give his decision on whether to declare half-Jews as Jews. Hitler probably did not declare half-Jews as Jews because he did not want to alienate the Aryan families of *Mischlinge* too much.

On 14 November 1935, the Reich Ministry of the Interior issued a supplement to the Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935, which created the racial categories of German Jew, half-Jew (Jewish *Mischlinge* first degree), and quarter-Jew (Jewish *Mischlinge* second degree), each with its own regulations. Apparently, Hitler decided for the time being to keep half-Jews as such rather than treating them as full-Jews. Full Jews had three to four grandparents. According to Hitler, when someone was more than 50 percent Jewish, he was beyond the point of saving and was evil. The Nazis had to resort to religious criteria to define these racial categories, ultimately determined by birth, baptismal, marriage, and death certificates. *Mischlinge* of the first degree were defined as those with two Jewish grandparents while *Mischlinge* of the second degree were defined as those with one Jewish grandparent. The *Mischlinge* were officially excluded from membership in the Nazi Party and all Party organizations (e.g. SA, SS, etc.). Although they were drafted into the Germany Army, they could not attain the rank of officers. They were also barred from the civil service and from certain professions. (Individual *Mischlinge* were, however, granted exemptions under certain circumstances.) Nazi officials considered plans to sterilize *Mischlinge*, but this was never done. During World War II, first-degree *Mischlinge*, incarcerated in concentration camps, were deported to death camps.

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