

Between Assimilation and Annihilation: Jews in Germany and Their Children

by Dr. Andreas J. Schwab¹

In 1933, my father, Georg-Maria Schwab, got a letter from the University of Munich where he was a professor. When he opened it, there was a questionnaire with a few simple questions. One of the questions was: “Are you of Aryan descent?”²

My father had no doubts how he would answer this question: Had he not received the holy sacrament of confirmation? He was absolutely sure that he was catholic, just as his father was catholic, as was his mother and his brother. But the questionnaire included the instruction to provide documents: among others, the birth and marriage certificates of his parents, which, at that time, contained information on religion. So he wrote to his father in Berlin and asked him to send him the required documents.

His father’s reply hit him like a bombshell: “Son, there is no such thing as Aryan descent for you: I was born a Jew.”

Till the age 34, my father had known nothing about his Jewish ancestry.

I, too, knew nothing about my Jewish ancestry until I was a young adult. Like my grandfather, my father did not talk much about his past, almost nothing about his parents or his relatives. I never knew my paternal grandparents. Both had died before I was born.

My father died in 1984, the year before I moved to Montreal with my family. It took me another fifteen years before I finally decided to try to make sense of the bits and pieces that I knew about my father. Thus began my journey into family history and genealogy.



**Georg-Maria Schwab
(1899-1984)**
(Photo: private)

¹ Based on a talk given at the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal on Monday, 9 December 2013

² Question 4 e) of the *Fragebogen zur Durchführung des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums vom 7. April 1933* (Questionnaire for the enforcement of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of 7 April 1933)

The Rural Jews of Franconia

I soon found out that my Schwab ancestors were from Rimpfar, a picturesque town about 10 km north of Würzburg. When my great-great-great-grandfather Löw was born about 1760, Rimpfar had 800 inhabitants, 30 of them Jews. At the time, Jews were not allowed to own land or to learn a trade. They were also not allowed to open a store, so they only could do business at the market, as peddlers or as cattle dealers. Jews were not allowed to live in the city of Würzburg itself from which they had been expelled in 1642.

The daily life of the Jews in Rimpfar in the 18th century was similar to that in an East-European *shtetl*. Their religious life was one of traditional Judaism. They followed *halakhah* and observed *kashrut*. Interactions with the Christian population were minimal. The language they spoke at home was *Jüdischdeutsch* — Jewish German, a language similar to that of the German majority, enriched with Hebrew words and written with the Hebrew alphabet. The boys went to the Jewish *cheder* where they learned Hebrew, the Torah, arithmetic, but no German. There were no schools for the girls. Jews had their own jurisdiction; the Rabbi was at the same time judge.

In 1816, the region around Würzburg became part of Bavaria and was thus subjected to the Bavarian Law of 1813³. According to this law, Bavarian Jews were registered in lists known as *Matrikel* or *Judenmatrikel*. These lists were the successors of the protection documents that were issued to Jews in pre-Bavarian times. The town of Rimpfar obtained 25 slots in this *Matrikel* for its 120 Jews, one slot for each family. The idea was to keep the number of Jewish families in each town constant. When the owner of a *Matrikel* slot died, the slot was given to his oldest son. The other sons were not allowed to have a family in the same town; they had to emigrate. If they stayed, they had the status of an illegal alien with no rights. They were the so-called *Betteljuden* — beggar Jews. By the middle of the 19th century, about half the Jews in the area were *Betteljuden*. But there were a few other possibilities for them to obtain a residence permit.

One of these slots was given to my great-great-great-grandfather Löw. His grandson, my great-grandfather Bernhard⁴, was not so lucky as to inherit a Rimpfar *Matrikel* slot. In May 1861, at

³ The “Edict of 10 June 1830 Regarding the Status of Persons of Jewish Faith in the Kingdom of Bavaria”, see the translation by Eric G. Yondorf at http://www.rijo.homepage.t-online.de/pdf/EN_BY_JU_edikt_e.pdf.

⁴ Bernhard Joseph (Baruch) Schwab, 22 April 1835 Rimpfar – 31 January 1887 Würzburg, son of Joseph Löw Schwab (1801 Rimpfar – 29 January 1865 Würzburg) and Anna Schwab née Weinschenk

age 26, he married a young widow, Jeanette Schönfeld née Scheidt.⁵ Jeanette was from the village of Ermetzhofen, about 50 kilometres south of Würzburg. She was childless and had inherited a slot in the *Matrikel* of Ermetzhofen from her first husband, Jakob Löb Schönfeld.⁶ Now Bernhard would be the lucky owner of a *Matrikel* slot. But only six months later, in November of the same year, the *Matrikel* was abolished, and the Jews obtained the right to settle anywhere in the Kingdom of Bavaria.

Jeanette gave birth to a boy, Max. She died in 1863 at age 25 after one year and a half of marriage.

Bernhard married again in the same year my great-grandmother, Justine nee Rosenfeld.⁷ He moved from Ermetzhofen to the neighbouring town of Uffenheim where business opportunities were better. Justine had four boys, one died in infancy. She also died young, at the age of 26. My great-grandfather was now a double widower. He must have been devastated by the death of his two young wives, and he decided to commemorate their lives with elaborate gravestones. The broken columns on the stones are symbols of a life that ended too early. On Jeanette's headstone, there is an acrostic poem where each line starts with a letter of her Yiddish name, *Shprintzla*⁸. On the western side of the stone, there is also an acrostic poem, this time in German, with the name Jeanette. On Justine's headstone, there is an acrostic poem with her Yiddish name *Yentil*⁹; on the German side, the poem starts with syllables as well as single letters: Frau Ju-Sti-Ne Sch-W-A-B.

⁵ Jeanette Scheidt (or Scheid), 15 September 1836 Mainstockheim – 16 January 1863 Ermetzhofen, daughter of Salomon Scheidt and Jeanette Scheidt née Kuhn; see *The Scheidts in Mainstockheim 1730 – 1870* by Heinz and Thea Ruth Skyte, née Ephraim, http://www.rijo.homepage.t-online.de/pdf/en_de_ju_sky10102.pdf.

⁶ Jakob Löb Schönfeld, (1825 Dornheim, today part of Iphofen, Lower Franconia – 3 April 1860) was included in the *Matrikel* in 1857 as successor of Abraham Meier Sängler who had never married and had moved to Uffenheim.

⁷ Justine Rosenfeld, 12 December 1843 Leutershausen, Bavaria – 14 February 1870 Uffenheim, Bavaria, daughter of Aaron Rosenfeld and Jette née Guggenheimer.

⁸ The name '*Shprintsla*' is probably of Sephardic origin and is derived from the Spanish *Esperanza*, hope.

⁹ The name '*Yentil*' is probably derived from the French "*gentille*", noble.



Headstones for Justine Schwab née Rosenfeld (1843–1870, left) and Jeanetta Schwab née Scheid, (1838–1863, right)

(Photo: Andreas Schwab)

On older Jewish gravestones, there are no German inscriptions, because the ritual language was Hebrew. The fact that Jeanette and Justine were commemorated with poems in German shows that in the middle of the 19th century, Jews in rural Bavaria had abandoned *Jüdisch-Deutsch* and now used Standard German. This is a sign of the on-going integration of Jews into the mainstream society.

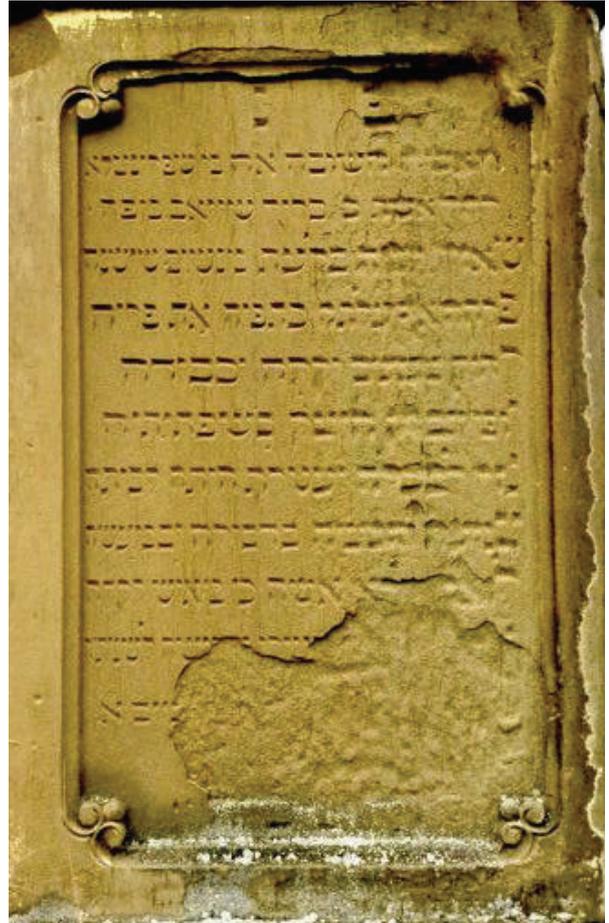
After the death of his second wife, my great-grandfather Bernhard Schwab took his four boys and moved to the city of Würzburg where his mother was living. His mother died on 30 September 1886, and Bernhard died four months later, on 31 January 1887. I found the headstones for Bernhard and his mother Nani¹⁰ in the Jewish cemetery of Würzburg. Nani's headstone is in German and Hebrew. But Bernhard's headstone is in German only. No Hebrew inscription. No Jewish date. No prayer for eternal life. A new era for the German Jews, that had begun decades earlier in Berlin, had reached my family.

¹⁰ Anna "Nani" Schwab, 27 May 1813 Fürth – 30 September 1886 Würzburg, daughter of Samuel Sanvil Weinschenk and Rebekka Ullmann

פ נ

האשה חשובה אח מ שפרינצלא
 רחל אשת כ ברוך שוואב מפה
שא [... ..] בלעת מנשים שושנה
פר[חה... ..] עלתל כתפוח את פריה
ר[חוק מפנינים] יקרה וכבודה
יופי [וכבוד] הוצק בשפתותיה
נזר לבעלה ועטרת היתה לביתה
צ[נועה ...] בדבורה ובמעשה
ל[זאת יקרא] אשה כי מאיש לקחת
א[....] עשרים וחמשה לשנותיה
 [...] ביום א

[ת נ צ ב ה]



Headstone for Jeanetta Schwab, Hebrew side with acrostic poem on the name Shprintzla

(Photo: Christian Zickler)

Here lies

The respected woman, woman of valor, Mrs. Srintzla

Rachel, wife of Baruch Schwab from this town,

... of women, her rose

[blossomed, ...] like an apple her fruit,

Her worth and honor far more than pearls,¹¹

Beauty [and honor] her lips have been anointed,¹²

A tiara to her husband, and crown she was to her home,

[Modest ...] in her speech and deeds,

[Therefore she was called] a woman for she was taken from a man.¹³

[...] twenty five of her years,

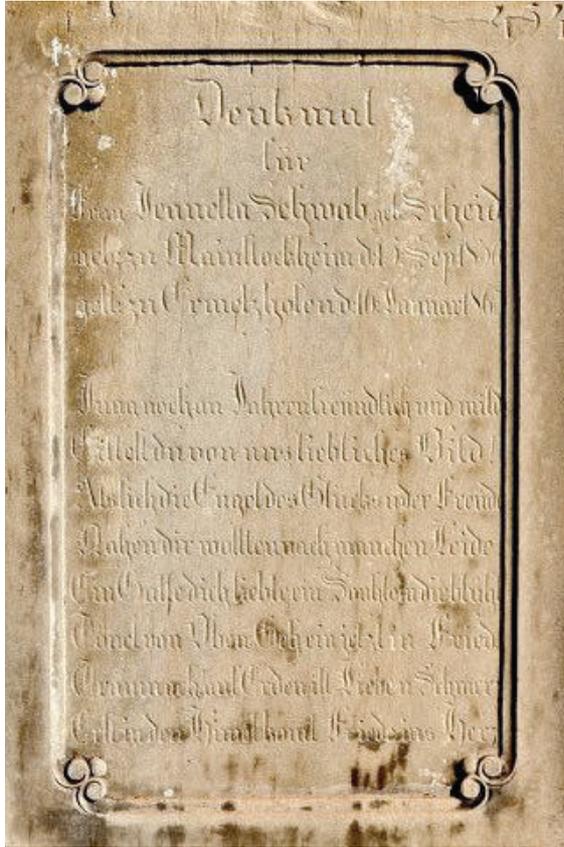
[...] on Sunday

[...]

¹¹ Proverbs 31:10 “ורחוק מפנינים מכרה” (She is worth far more than pearls).

¹² Psalms 45:3 “הוצק חן בשפתותיך” (Your lips have been anointed with grace).

¹³ Genesis 2:23 “לזאת יקרא אשה כי מאיש לקחה זאת” (She will be named [woman] because she was taken from man.).



Denkmal

für

Frau Jeanetta geb. Scheid

geb: zu Mainstockheim d: 15: Sep: 1836

gest: zu Ermetzhofen d: 16: Januar 1867

Jung noch an Jahren, freundlich und mild

Eilest du von uns, liebliches Bild

Als sich die Engel des Glücks u: der Freude

Nahen dir wollten nach manchen Leide

Ein Gatte dich liebte, ein Söhnlein dir blüht

Tönet von Oben: Geh ein jetzt in Fried.

Traum ach! Auf Erden ist Liebe und Schmerz

Erst in den Himmel kommt Friede ins Herz

Headstone for Jeanette Schwab, German side with acrostic poem on the name JEANETTE

(Photo: Jonas Miller Fotografie, Uffenheim)

Monument for Mrs Jeanetta nee Scheid
born in Mainstockheim on 15 Sept. 1836
died in Ermetzhofen on 16 January 1867

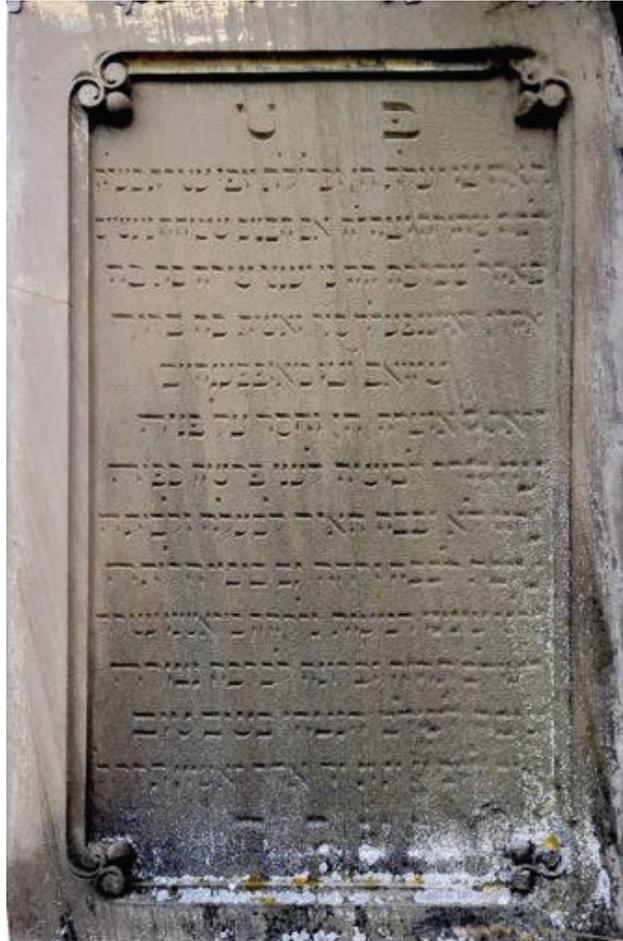
Still young of age, friendly and gentle
You sped from us, a lovely image.
When the angels of happiness and joy
Were approaching you after many sufferings,
When a husband was loving you, a little son blossoming for you,
It sounded from above: depart now in peace.
But a dream, alas! are love and pain on earth.
Only in heaven does peace come into the heart.

ט פ

[...] יעלת חן וכלילת יופי עטרת בעלה
 לבה טהורה וצהלה אם הבנים שמחה
 מנשים
 באהל מברכת הה מ יענט שרה בת כה
 אהרן ראזענפעלד סגל ואשת כה ברוך
 שוואב יצו מאופפענהיים.

יראת [...] חן וחסד על פניה
 עוז והדר לבושה לעני פרשה כפיה
 נרה לא יכבה תאיר לבעלה ולביתה
 טובת לבבה זרחה גם בימי חליתה
 ירדו עינינו דמעות נלקחה מראשנו עטרה
 לעולם תהיה זכרונה לברכה נצורה
 שבה לעולם הנצחי בשם טוב
 [...] יד אדר ראשון תרל ל

[ת נ] צ ב ה



Headstone for Justine Schwab, Hebrew side with acrostic poem on the name Yentil
 (Photo: Christian Zickler)

Translation:¹⁴

Here lies / [...], graceful woman, beautiful, the crown of her husband, / her heart pure and cheerful, happy mother of the children¹⁵, of all women / living in tents she is most blessed¹⁶, Mrs. Yent[il] Sarah daughter of honorable Mr. / Aron Rosenfeld the Levite, and wife of honorable Mr. Baruch / Schwab, his creator should protect him and give him life (acronym), from Uffenheim.

[...] grace and kindness on her face,

Strength and dignity are her clothing,¹⁷ to the poor she stretched out her hand¹⁸,

Her light will not be extinguished,¹⁹ it will shine for her husband and her home,

Her good heart also shone in the days of her sickness,

Our eyes would shed tears, a crown was taken from our head,

Her memory will always be reserved for blessing,

She returned to the eternal world with a good name,

[died] the 14th of the first Adar [5]630²⁰. / May her soul be bound up in the bonds of eternal life (acronym).

¹⁴ Transcription of the Hebrew text and translation by Yitschok Margareten

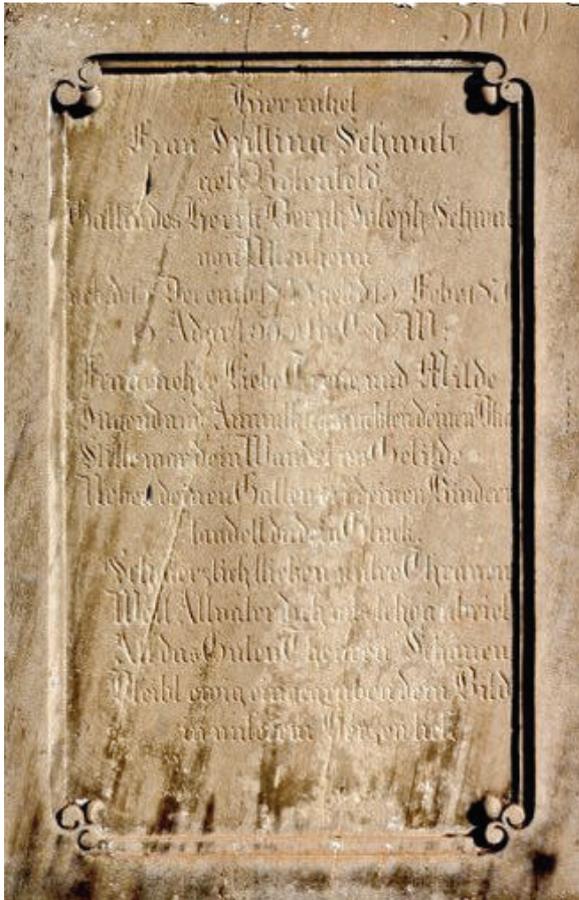
¹⁵ Psalms 113:9 “מושיבי עקרת הבית אם הבנים שמחה” (He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children).

¹⁶ Judges 5:24 “תברך מנשים יעל אשת חבר הקיני מנשים באהל תברך” (Most blessed of women) be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women”.

¹⁷ Proverbs 31:25 “עוז והדר לבושה, ותשחק ליום אחרון” (Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the days to come).

¹⁸ Proverbs 31:20 “כפה פרשה לעני וידיה שלחה לאביון” (She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy).

¹⁹ Proverbs 31:18 “טעמה כי טוב סחרה לא יכבה בלילה נרה” (She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night).



Headstone for Justine Schwab, German side with acrostic poem
(Photo: Jonas Miller Fotografie, Uffenheim)

Here lies Mrs. Justina Schwab nee Rosenfeld
Wife of Mr. Bernhard Joseph Schwab from Uffenheim
born on 13 December 1843 died on 13 Febr 1870
13 Adar I 5630 A.M.

A woman's virtue, love, faith and gentleness,
Youth and grace adorned your glance.
Quiet was your ambling in the fields.
On the side of your husband and among your children you found your happiness.
Painfully our tears flow
Because the Universal Father has called you away from us.
All what is good, dear and beautiful
Remains forever engraved, your image,
Deep in our hearts.

Hier ruhet
Frau Justina Schwab,

geb: Rosenfeld,
Gattin des Herrn Bernhard Joseph Schwab
von Uffenheim
geb: d: 13 Decemb: 1843 gest: d: 13 Febr: 1870
13 Adar I 5630 seit E: d: W:

Frauenehre Liebe Treue und Milde
Jugend und Anmuth schmückten deinen Blick
Stille war dein Wandel im Gefilde
Neben deinen Gatten bei deinen Kindern
fandest du dein Glück.
Schmerzlich fließen unsre Thränen
Weil Allvater dich uns schon abrief
All das Guten Theuren Schönen
Bleibt ewig eingegraben dein Bild
in unserem Herzen tief.

²⁰ The date 14th of the first Adar 5630 is Feb. 15, 1870. According to other sources, Justine died on Feb. 14, presumably after sunset.



Headstone for Nanni Schwab nee Weinschenk (1813–1886)

פ ט
 מווירצבורג
 האשת חיל פועלת טוב ומכבדת
 תורה מרת קנענדל אלמנת
 כ יוסף שוואב מרימפאר
 נפטרת יום א דראש השנה
 ונקברת ביום ב דראש השנה
 שנת תרמז לפק
 תנצבה

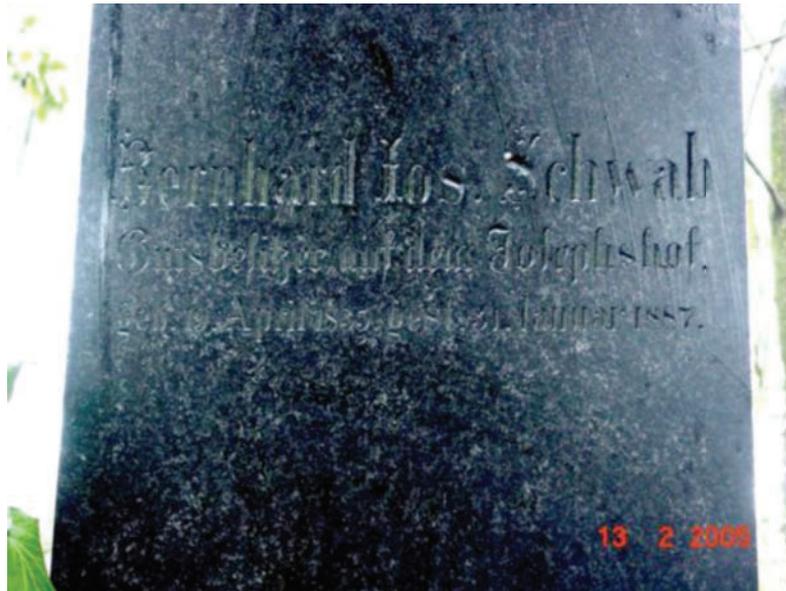
Hier ruht
 Frau Nani Schwab
 Geb. Weinschenk
 Geb. 27. Mai 1813 , gest. 30. September 1886

Translation:

Here lies (acronym) / From Würzburg / The woman of valor, doing good (deeds), honouring Torah, Mrs. Knendel, widow of / Honorable (standard title) Yosef Schwab from Rimpar / died on the first day of Rosh HaShana / and buried on the second day of Rosh HaShana / Year [5]647 in small detail (acronym – commonly used after a Hebrew year number which excludes the thousands, in this case 647=5647)

May her soul be bound up in the bonds of eternal life (acronym)

Here rests / Mrs. Nani Schwab Née Weinschenk / Born 27 Mai 1813, died 30 September 1886



Headstone for Bernhard Jos. Schwab, Estate owner at the Josefshof, (19 April 1835 - 31 January 1887)

(Photo: Andreas Schwab)

Bernhard Ios. Schwab
 Gutsbesitzer auf dem Josephshof
 Geb. 9. April 1835 gest. 31. Januar 1887

Translation:
 Bernhard Jos[eph] Schwab
 Estate owner of the Joseph farm
 Born 9. April 1835 died 31. January 1887

The Age of Enlightenment

The end of the 17th century marks the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. It was the beginning of a new way of thinking, sparked by the scientific discoveries of Galileo and Newton.

According to the idea of Enlightenment, reason is more important than tradition for finding the truth. One of the prominent philosophers of the time was Baruch Spinoza,²¹ a Jew.

Enlightenment had an enormous influence on European culture in general and ultimately led to the French Revolution. In Berlin, one of the prominent philosophers of the Enlightenment was Rabbi Moses Mendelssohn.²² He was the main proponent of *Haskalah*, the Jewish interpretation of the ideas of Enlightenment.

The industrial revolution had diminished the importance of agriculture. The privileges of the nobility in a feudal society were waning. A new kind of social community appeared. I don't have an English word for it, in French it is called *la bourgeoisie* and in German, *das Bürgertum*. It is only approximately translated by 'the middle class'. Today, when we speak of the middle class, we think of a family living in a suburb in a single-family home with a front and a back yard, where both parents work while the children go to day care. A member of the 19th Century *Bürgertum* was living in a large apartment in the city. The housewife had a live-in maid to help her with the household chores and a nanny to help her with the education of the children.

But most importantly, *Bürgertum* was founded not on inherited wealth, like the nobility, but on *Bildung*: another word that has no translation in English. *Bildung* is commonly translated by 'education', but it is more than this: it is the combination of an education in classical languages and the liberal arts, with a cultured way of life. A large part of Jewish population in the large urban centres in Germany at the time belonged to the so-called *Bildungsbürgertum*. Conversely, a large part of the *Bildungsbürgertum* consisted of Jews and Protestant pastors. Many of these Jews regarded themselves as secular Jews, defining their Jewishness not by their religion, but by their ancestry. They thought of themselves as belonging to a Jewish nation.

²¹ Baruch (Benedict de) Spinoza, born Benedito de Espinosa (24 November 1632 Amsterdam – 21 February 1677 The Hague), lens grinder and philosopher of Portuguese-Sephardic descent

²² Moses Mendelssohn (6 September 1729 Dessau – 4 January 1786 Berlin)

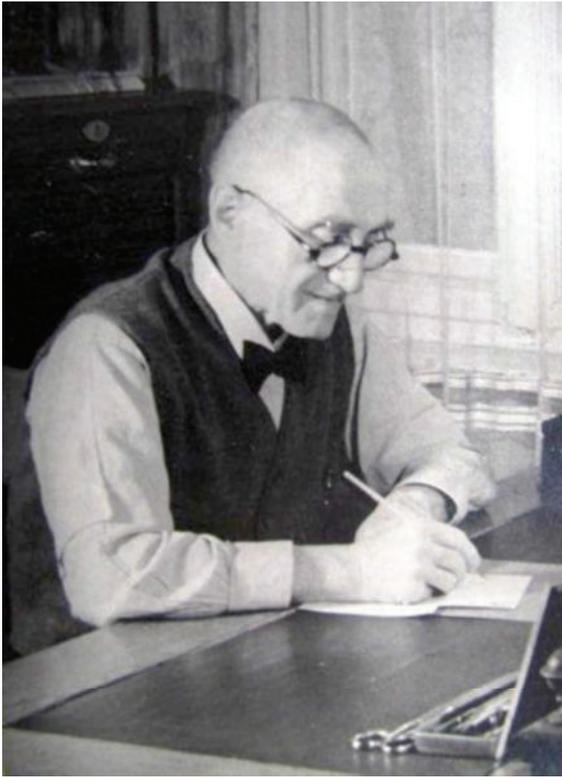
This transition is best exemplified by the descendants of Moses Mendelssohn. Moses's son Abraham²³ was baptized and then adopted the surname Bartholdy from his brother-in-law²⁴. His son was the famous composer Felix Mendelssohn²⁵. Felix, of Jewish descent, was not circumcised, and was not brought up as a Jew; he was baptized together with his parents and siblings when he was seven years old.

However, not all German Jews went that path. During the 19th and beginning 20th century, you could find a whole spectrum of attitudes: from those who still adhered strictly to *halakhah*, in particular the orthodox Jews, those who adhered to *Haskalah* — the *maskilim* — and finally those who had abandoned the Jewish faith altogether. Many cities had two synagogues — one orthodox, where the traditional services were held in Hebrew, and one reformed, where services included a sermon in German.

²³ Abraham Ernst Mendelssohn Bartholdy (10 December 1776 Berlin – 19 November 1835 Berlin), banker and philanthropist

²⁴ Abraham's brother-in-law Jacob Levi Salomon adopted the surname Bartholdy after a dairy farm that his maternal grandfather Daniel Itzig had purchased in the 1770s as a country estate.

²⁵ Felix Jakob Ludwig Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (3 February 1809 Hamburg – 4 November 1847 Leipzig)



Josef Bernhard Schwab (1865–1940)
(Photo: private)



Marie Schwab née Köglmayr (1864–1919)
(Photo: private)

Assimilation in Berlin

My grandfather, Josef Schwab, was born on 22 April 1865 in Uffenheim. At age 17, he enrolled in the University of Würzburg in science. After the death of his father, he continued his studies in Munich, this time in political sciences. This is where he probably met his future wife, Marie Köglmayr, a catholic from Bavaria. They married in 1896 in Berlin, where my grandfather was working as a journalist. He later joined the editorial board of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, then the most important daily newspaper in Germany. Although it was not a Jewish paper, most of the journalists were Jews or of Jewish origin. This is remarkable, given that only about 1% of the German population were Jewish. This was a general phenomenon: a large proportion of lawyers and physicians were Jews, too.

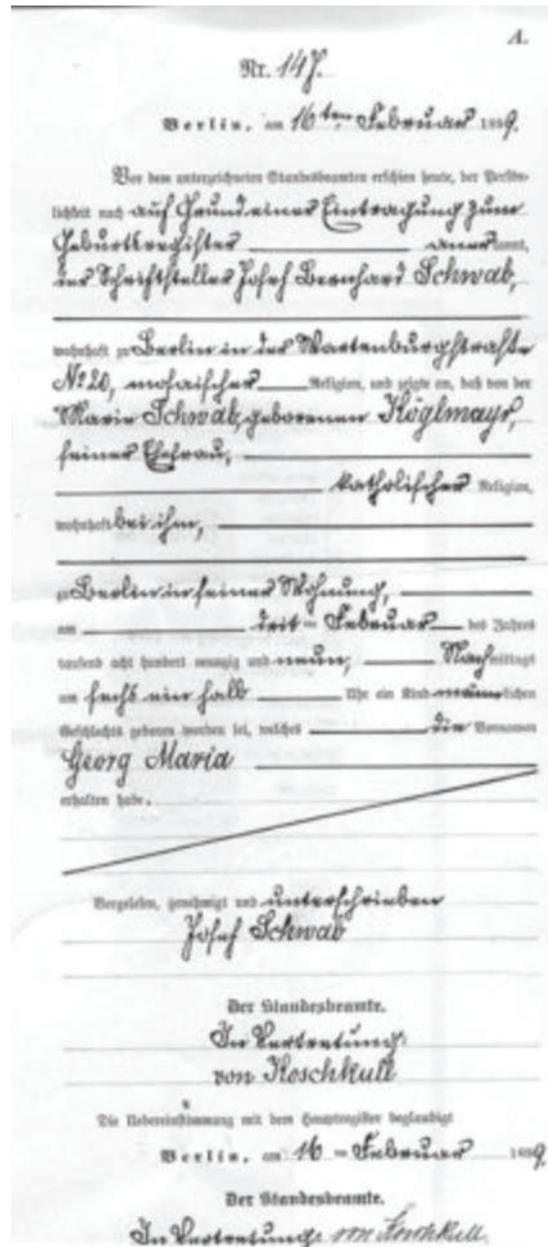
My grandfather Josef went even further than Mendelsohn. After marrying a catholic, he eliminated everything Jewish from his life. And, as already mentioned at the beginning, he did not tell his family that he had been born and brought up a Jew. Had my father looked closely at his birth certificate, he would have noticed that the religion of his father was clearly marked as ‘*mosaisch*’.

In revealing the secrets of my own hidden Jewish heritage, I have come to realize that we were far from unique. A few examples: Rudolf Petersen²⁶ was the first mayor of Hamburg after the Second World War. Like my father, he did not know that his mother was Jewish until 1933 when the Nazis asked him about his ancestry. Madeleine Albright²⁷ learned from a Journalist the very day she was confirmed as the US Secretary of State that both her parents were born as Jews.

My father defined himself as a catholic Bavarian. His middle name, Maria, is not what you would expect from a Jew; it was a sign of Christian spirituality. Maria as a middle name for a Catholic man was not uncommon at the time. Prominent examples are the composer Carl Maria von Weber and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

In World War I, my father served at the Belgian front — in fact, he served as a railway pioneer and never shot a single bullet. In 1923, he obtained his PhD in Chemistry in Berlin, where the most prominent scientists of Germany, Albert Einstein and Max Planck, were teaching. Later he became associate professor at the University of Munich, at the instigation of the prominent chemist and Nobel Prize winner Heinrich Wieland²⁸.

On older Jewish gravestones, there are no German inscriptions, because the ritual language was



Birth record of Georg-Maria Schwab, indicating that his father, Joseph Bernhard Schwab, was “mosaischer Religion” (of Jewish religion)

²⁶ Rudolf Hieronymus Petersen (30 December 1878 Hamburg – 10 September 1962 Wentorf), businessman, politician (CDU) and First Mayor of Hamburg (1945–1946).

²⁷ Madeleine Jana Korbel Albright (born Marie Jana Korbelová 15 May 1937 Prague), US Secretary of State 1993–1997

²⁸ Heinrich Otto Wieland (4 June 1877 Pforzheim – 5 August 1957 Starnberg, Bavaria), professor of chemistry at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, 1927 Nobel Prize in Chemistry

Hebrew. The fact that Jeanette and Justine were commemorated with poems in German shows that in the middle of the 19th century, Jews in rural Bavaria had abandoned *Jüdisch-Deutsch* and now used Standard German. This is a sign of the on-going integration of Jews into the mainstream society.

It was here that he received in 1933 the ominous questionnaire. The reason for this was the notorious Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. According to this law, civil servants with one or more Jewish grandparents, or who were dissidents or had insufficient qualifications were dismissed. This included teachers, railway workers, postal workers, etc. This restriction was later extended to physicians, lawyers and others.

In 1933, the German President Hindenburg²⁹ was still alive. In a letter to Hitler, he protested against the discrimination of those who had served in the Great War and had proven their patriotism. Hitler had no choice but to grant an exemption for World War I veterans.³⁰ As my father was one of them, he was initially spared and could keep his position.

Two years later, the Nuremberg Laws³¹ were promulgated, which exacerbated discrimination against Jews.

From the beginning of the Nazi rule, there were two factions of Nazis. The hard-core party members, like Reinhard Heydrich³² and Julius Streicher³³, were in favour of getting rid of everybody who had at least one Jewish ancestor. On the other side of the spectrum were the bureaucrats in the administration, led by Bernhard Lösener³⁴ who had a high position in the Ministry of the Interior. Lösener's arguments were that including Christians of Jewish descent in repressive measures was impractical and would jeopardize the economic recovery that led the German people to look at the new regime with a good eye. It would also alienate the 'Aryan' relatives of the 'half-Jews' and ultimately affect the morale of the general population. In the end, Lösener prevailed, at least temporarily, and in the next round of discriminatory

²⁹ Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg (2 October 1847 Posen – 2 August 1934 Gut Neudeck, East Prussia), President of Germany 1925 – 1934

³⁰ Article 3 paragraph 2 of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service

³¹ *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* (Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour) and *Reichsbürgergesetz* (Reich Citizenship Law), both of 15 September 1935

³² Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich (7 March 1904 Halle an der Saale – 4 June 1942 Prague), head of Gestapo and Acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, one of Hitler's closest allies

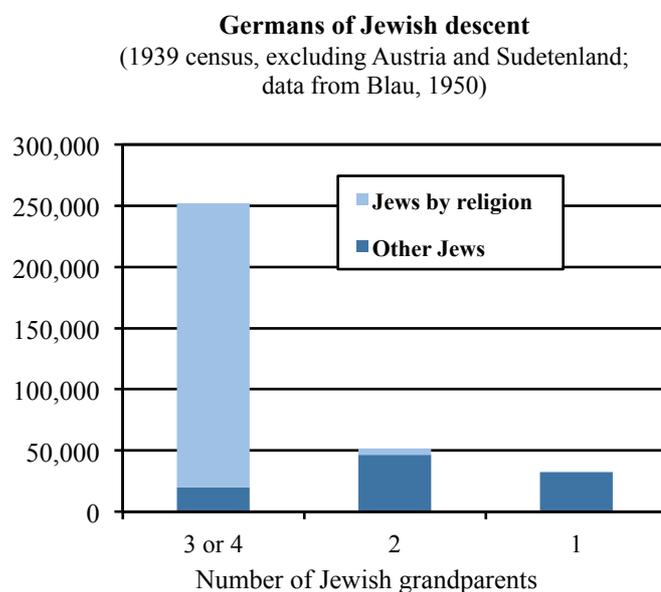
³³ Julius Streicher (12 February 1885 Fleinhausen, Bavaria – 16 October 1946 Nuremberg), *Gauleiter* of Franconia, founder and publisher of the infamous national-socialist weekly *Der Stürmer*

³⁴ Bernhard Lösener (27 December 1890 Fürstenberg (Oder)– 28 August 1952 Cologne), lawyer and expert on Jews in the Reich Ministry of the Interior

measures, offspring from mixed marriages obtained a special status, that of ‘half-Jews’ or ‘*Mischlinge*’ — the mongrels³⁵.

Let us see how the Nuremberg Laws classified Germans:

- Racial Jews: these were persons with 3 or 4 Jewish grandparents. Jews were not allowed to marry non-Jews, could not vote or hold office, were unconditionally excluded from civil service, and were not allowed to hire female domestic workers under 45.
- ‘*Mischlinge*’ of the 1st degree: persons with 2 Jewish grandparents. However, those of Jewish religion or married with Jews were treated like Racial Jews. ‘*Mischlinge*’ of the 1st degree were allowed to marry non-Jews or ‘*Mischlinge*’ of the 2nd degree, but only with special permission.
- ‘*Mischlinge*’ of the 2nd degree: Persons with 1 Jewish grandparent. These were not allowed to marry each other and, of course, were not allowed to marry Jews. They were supposed to marry Aryans so that their genes got diluted.
- Everybody else was regarded as Aryan — if he or she did not happen to be black or a gypsy.



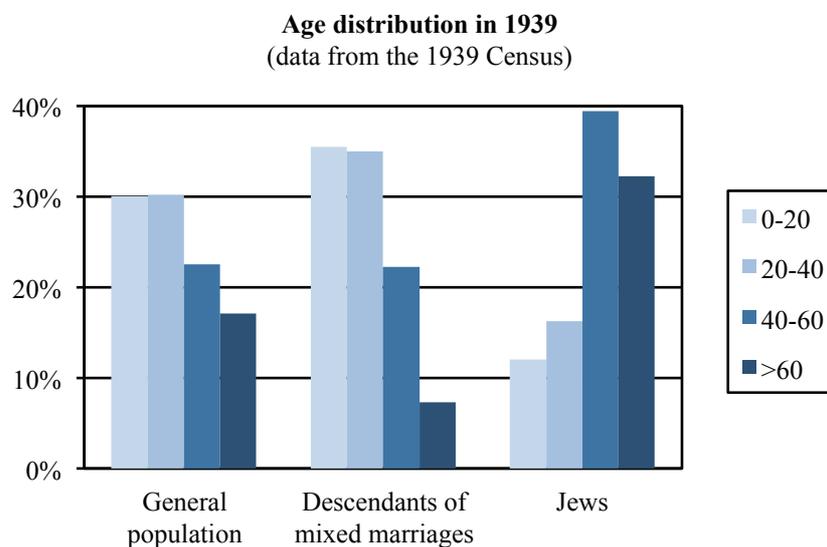
³⁵ *Mischling* in German means ‘cross-breed’ and is generally used for animals.

Accordingly, my father was considered *'Mischling'* of the 1st degree. The exemption for veterans was abolished for 'full' Jews, but not for the *'Mischlinge'*. This meant that my father could stay in his job for the time being.

Sixty years earlier, in 1875, the civil code had been introduced in Germany, and with this, civil marriages. This meant that for the first time, a Jew had been allowed to marry a non-Jew without one of the two converting to the other's faith. Now, in 1935, mixed marriages were banned outright, with or without conversion. In 1939 there were still about 50,000 children of mixed marriages alive, besides 200,000 'full Jews'. Whereas the majority of the 'full Jews' adhered to the Jewish faith and were part of a *kehillah*, 90% of the so-called 'half-Jews' were Christians or non-religious; their children, the quarter-Jews, were about 30,000, and 99% were not Jews by religion.

The *'Mischlinge'* were never a cohesive group, because they had hardly any contact with each other. For the largest part, they regarded themselves as ordinary members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In Germany, most of them survived the war. This was not the case in the occupied countries outside Germany, where children of Jews were treated as Jews and murdered, irrespective of the faith of the other parent. The number of Jews in Germany remained relatively constant at 1% of the population until the beginning of the 3rd Reich. In 1939, only half as many Jews were living in Germany compared to 1933. This was due mainly to emigration. Of those who managed to leave Germany before 1941, most went to the United States or Palestine; but when the Germans occupied countries such as France, Belgium or the Netherlands, those who had sought refuge there were deported, too. Of those who stayed in Germany, the vast majority perished.

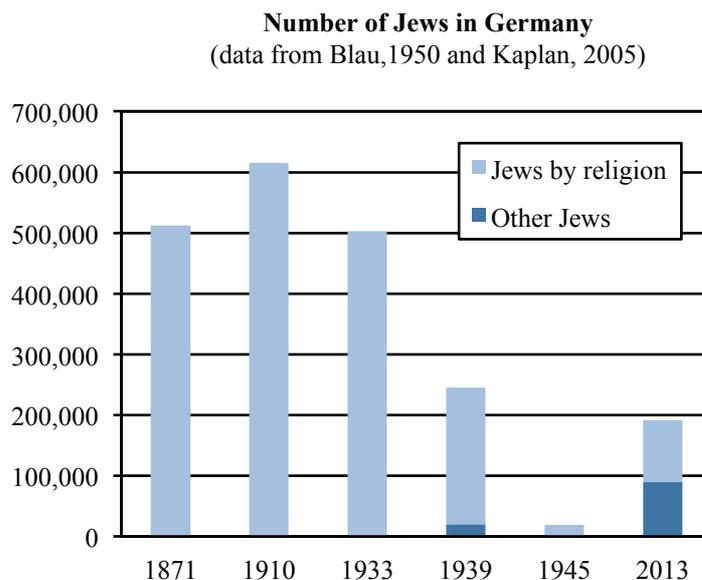
There were about 19,000 German Jews left at the end of World War II; of these the vast



majority were spouses of non-Jews. When these Jews were about to be deported in February 1943, their fate was turned around by their courageous spouses who organized a large peaceful protest — the famous Rosenstrasse protest.³⁶ At the end, the Nazis released them, and many of them survived. A handful of German Jews managed to survive in hiding.

Today there are an estimated 200,000 Jews living in Germany, as many as in 1939; about half of them are secular Jews. They mostly came from the Soviet Union in the 1990s and have nothing in common with the secular Jews in 19th century Germany. But this would be the subject of a different talk about Soviet Jews.³⁷

A look at the age distribution of the Jews and the offspring of mixed marriages in 1939 is revealing. In the Jewish population, the young had all but disappeared; they had emigrated and left the elderly behind. The *'Mischlinge'*, however, who stayed in Germany, were slightly younger than the general population.



³⁶ On 22 February 1943, about 2000 Jews, the majority of them married to non-Jewish women, were brought to a building at Rosenstrasse 2-4 in Berlin. They were later released. There is disagreement among historians if their release was a reaction to the protest. These events were chronicled in the 2003 film *"Rosenstrasse"*, directed by Margarethe von Trotta and starring Maria Schrader and Katja Riemann.

³⁷ The Central Council of Jews in Germany counts 100,000 members in 108 local communities. The number of non-religious Jews living in Germany today can only be roughly estimated. Between 1990 and 1994, 220,000 Jews immigrated from the countries of the former Soviet Union into Germany.

Now back to the story of my father. In spite of the Nuremberg laws, he remained a professor and civil servant for some time, although he could not be promoted and his career came to a still-stand. But his mentor, Wieland, was a man of character and a resolute anti-Nazi. In his laboratory, he created an atmosphere of honesty and trust. Under his tenure as chairman of the Department of Organic Chemistry there were 25 'half-Jewish' students whom he protected against harassment and persecution, aided by his prestige as a Nobel Prize winner. This was the atmosphere in which my father worked during the beginning of the Nazi era.

But ultimately, in 1938, even Wieland could not prevent that, like all other 'half-Jews', my father lost his teaching privileges and, as a consequence, his employment at the University.



Elly Agallidis (1914–2006)
(Photo: private)



**Elly Schwab née Agallidis (1914–2006) and
Georg-Maria Schwab (1899–1984)**
(Photo: private)

Exile in Greece

This is where my Greek mother came into play. She had been in Munich where she had been doing experimental work for her PhD under the supervision of my father. It happened that in that year, 1938, a new research institute was established in Greece.³⁸ My mother could make the connection, and so my father became one of the lead researchers and could continue his scientific work. Soon afterwards, my parents got married.

In 1941, the Germans attacked Greece. My father, who was considered an enemy alien, was interned by the Greeks. He could not leave the country to escape from the Nazis. When the Germans captured Athens and the swastika was flying over the Acropolis, my father was released. But he had to keep a low profile. For the Greeks, he was still a German, but for the occupier, he was a ‘half-Jew’, and therefore he was in danger. In June 1943, all German citizens were ordered by the Germans to return to Germany.

Fortunately for him — and for me — my father was protected by a courageous official of the German Embassy in Athens. His name was Alfred Lüders. In the papers we found after my father’s death there was a document that my father submitted to the American consulate after the war to exonerate Mr Lüders.

³⁸ Institute of Chemistry and Agriculture “N. Kanellopoulos” at the Anonymous Greek Company of Chemical Products and Fertilizers, Drapetsona, Greece

Statement.

By this I declare that Mr Lüders, from 1942 until 1994 Chancellor of the German Consulate in Athens, helped me essentially in the following affair, by disobeying explicit order of the Nazi-Party.

I was Professor of Chemistry at the Munich University, until in 1938 my venia legend was nullified and I was removed from the university because of my “non Aryan” origin (my father has been a Jew). Thereupon [sic] in 1939 I emigrated to Greece and took over here an industry research laboratory.

Late in 1942 the German Foreign Office issued a law, according to which all the German subjects of non Aryan origin abroad were either to return to Germany or to lose their nationality and passport. In spite of this, Mr. Lüders a month later gave me a new passport, and even when this expired, he did not take it from me, but with different pretexts he let pass by nearly a year, and then he advised [sic] me to make first a petition for the renewal of my passport, and when, in April 1944, this petition was rejected, he further delayed the affair.

Only when, in the end of August 1944, the Nazi evacuated by force all German civilians from Athens and ordered me also to leave – probably in order to put me in a concentration camp in Germany –, Mr. Lüders informed me that he had got again a severe order to send me back, but again he gave me the opportunity to gain time by a new petition of mine, although he knew that this petition – expedited in the middle of September 1944 – was bound answered before the total evacuation of Athens by the German troops. In my own presence he energetically obstructed to the urgent demand of the Nazi Party representatives to send me to Germany, and he promised me his assistance in case further pressure would be exerted on me. By this conduct of his I really succeeded to remain in Greece until the liberation and so to avoid the fate, probably awaiting me in Nazi Germany and indeed fallen on most of my relatives there.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Lüders did so although he was no personal acquaintance or friend of mine, but know me only on account of the affair. He never even told me his motive and only afterwards [sic] I understood that he endeavoured to act for the good under the pressure of a dangerous terror.

By his courageous deed Mr. Lüders not only saved me and my family, but he prevented the Nazi regime to put in practice its racial programm [sic] on my person.

Athens (Greece), December 19th, 1946.



**Josef-Maria Schwab
(1897–1945)**

The ‘half-Jews’

He thus escaped the fate of his brother Josef, who remained in Germany and had to endure the rising discrimination of the ‘half-Jews’. You can follow the on-going downfall of his career in the Berlin directories: In 1933, he was listed as a journalist. In 1935, he was a *Propagandist*, a travelling sales representative. In 1938, he was listed as an *Angestellter*, an employee. In 1943, he was a technical employee. This shows how the ‘half-Jews’ were gradually displaced from the traditional occupations of the *Bildungsbürgertum* to more mundane occupations.

As Jews were gradually isolated from the every-day life of the non-Jews, the remaining ‘half-Jews’ became the prime target for racial discrimination and harassment. Often, they were dismissed from their jobs, and it was hard for them to find a new job. Early on, they were excluded from most qualified occupations and had to work as unskilled or domestic workers. They also lived in fragmented families. There could be Nazis among their non-Jewish relatives who were hostile to them, and this, while their Jewish relatives were deported and killed.

When Jewish children were forced into Jewish schools in 1938, those from mixed marriages were allowed to remain in regular primary schools. There, they were often victims of discrimination and harassment. When there was a special event or an outing, they were usually not allowed to join. Enrolment into secondary schools and universities was limited starting 1933. In 1942, all ‘half-Jewish’ children were banned from secondary schools.

In October 1944, all male ‘half-Jews’ and all non-Jewish men married to Jewish women were recruited



**Headstone for Josef-Maria Schwab
(Photo: Andreas Schwab)**

into labour camps under the banner of the *Organisation Todt*.³⁹ Most of these camps were run and guarded in the same cruel way as the regular concentration camps. We know from internal Nazi documents that the annihilation of the '*Mischlinge*' had already been decided, but for practical reasons had been postponed until after the war, which of course the Nazis were determined to win. My uncle was in one of these camps in Germany. He died under mysterious circumstances one day before the Americans liberated the camp in 1945.⁴⁰

Let me recapitulate. Most of my Jewish relatives were murdered in the Shoah. My Jewish grandfather witnessed only the beginning of the persecution and died peacefully in July 1940. My father, a 'half-Jew', had the opportunity to flee, only to be overtaken by the Nazis when they conquered Greece. He could keep a low profile and was protected by benevolent officials. I, a '*Mischling*' of second degree, was not affected because I was under Nazi control only during the first year of my life.

³⁹ The *Organisation Todt* was a civil and military engineering group named after its founder, Fritz Todt, an engineer and senior Nazi figure. At the end of the war, most of the workers of the organization were forced labourers. The 'half-Jews' and husbands of Jewish women were concentrated in special camps, separated from the other workers.

⁴⁰ Josef died in Langenberg, Rheinland and is buried there in the war grave section of the local cemetery and shares a grave with Johann Hille, of whom nothing more is known. There were several *Organisation Todt* camps in Langenberg, but I could not find any information about the camp in which he was interned.

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Translation of the birth record of Georg-Maria Schwab

Nr. 147.

Berlin, the 16th of February 1899.

Before the undersigned civil registration officer appeared today, identified by an entry into the Birth Registry, the writer Josef Bernhard Schwab, residing in Berlin at Wartenburgstrasse number 20, of mosaic religion, and announced that Marie Schwab, née Köglmayer, his wife, of catholic religion, residing with him, gave birth in Berlin in his dwelling on the third of February of the year thousand eight hundred ninety-nine, at six and one half hours in the afternoon, to a child of male gender, who was given the name Georg Maria.

Read, approved and signed

Josef Schwab

The officer of civil registration

p.p. von Koschkull

The exact copy of the original is certified

Berlin, the 16th of February 1899

The officer of civil registration

p.p. von Koschkull