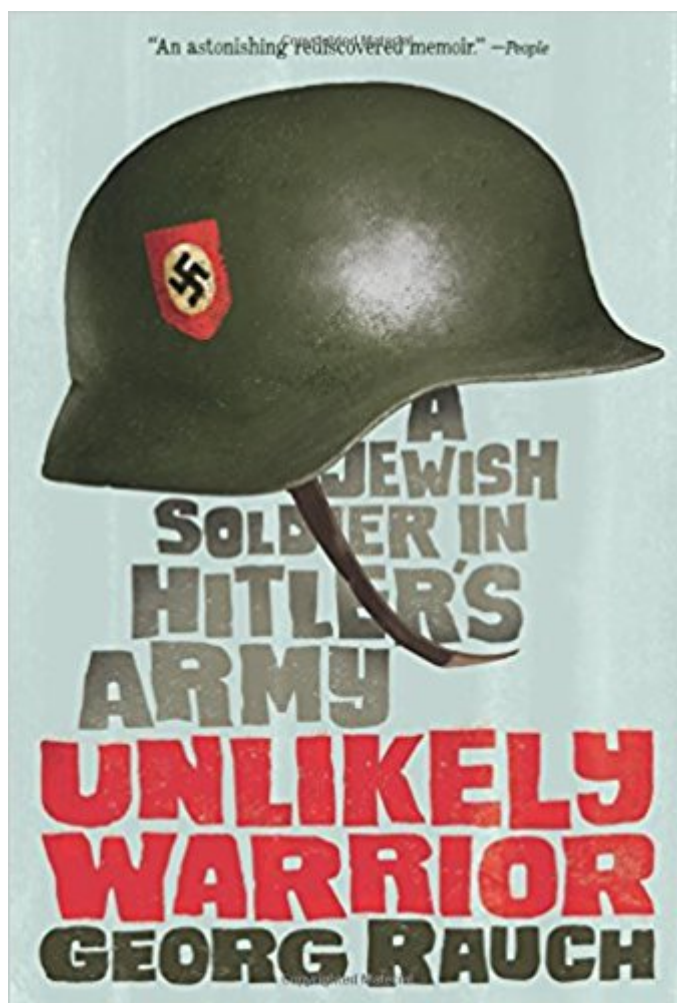


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# Unlikely Warrior: A Jewish Soldier In Hitler's Army



## Synopsis

As a young adult in wartime Vienna, Georg Rauch helped his mother hide dozens of Jews from the Gestapo behind false walls in their top-floor apartment and arrange for their safe transport out of the country. His family was among the few who worked underground to resist Nazi rule. Then came the day he was drafted into Hitler's army and shipped out to fight on the Eastern front as part of the German infantry— in spite of his having confessed his own Jewish ancestry. Thus begins the incredible journey of a nineteen year old thrust unwillingly into an unjust war, who must use his smarts, skills, and bare-knuckled determination to stay alive in the trenches, avoid starvation and exposure during the brutal Russian winter, survive more than one Soviet labor camp, and somehow find his way back home. *Unlikely Warrior* is Rauch's true account of this extraordinary adventure.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

**Gr 8 Up**— In this glimpse into history, Rauch, a young Jewish man in Third Reich Vienna, describes his experiences during World War II. Strongly opposed to Nazi rule, Rauch and his mother hid Jews in their apartment, helping them escape to safety, and worked with the underground resistance. But when Rauch was drafted into Hitler's army (though he admitted to having Jewish heritage), he was stationed on the Russian Front, facing the constant threat of death from hunger, the elements, and Soviet soldiers. The story is well paced, offering a fascinating and

intriguing look at the era. Included also are letters between Rauch and his mother. VERDICT A good supplementary purchase for libraries looking to expand their historical memoir section, complementing titles such as Leon Leyson's *The Boy on the Wooden Box: How the Impossible Became Possible* (S. & S., 2013). —Clair Segal, LREI, New York City --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“An exceptionally well-written account of unimaginable hardship, it's also an engaging read that serves as powerful testimony to the insanity of war and the human will to survive.” —Publishers Weekly, starred review “A fascinating account of what it was like for a partial Jew to serve in the German military during World War II. Rauch's experiences and hardships dramatically depict the physical and emotional struggles of a 'Mischling' during the Third Reich.” —Bryan Mark Rigg, author of *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers* “When Rauch was drafted into Hitler's army (though he admitted to having Jewish heritage), he was stationed on the Russian Front, facing the constant threat of death from hunger, the elements, and Soviet soldiers . . . A fascinating and intriguing look at the era.” —School Library Journal

The title of this book alone makes it interesting. *A Jewish Soldier in Hitler's Army?* It does make for an unlikely warrior and a very interesting story. The author was born German. Like most Europeans his family history was quite rich and complicated with intermarriage among faiths. With this in mind he was about, according to him, a fourth Jewish in blood. He was also a member of the aristocracy with a mother who held the rank of Baroness. As complicated as this sounds it's important to the history of the book. As it turns out this man's situation was not completely uncommon given the totality of the German war experience. There were others much like him who served the nation during a time of great distress. The Nazi system of government even had procedures to cover this type of situation. One of the more interesting aspects of this book concerns the use of radio technology. The author was a radio enthusiast who built his own small scale radios in his youth. This skill allowed him a unique position within any unit as he could work with one of the more technical systems in the army. In his case he went to an infantry unit on the Eastern front. It must have been like no other place on earth or in history. The author does a wonderful job describing his experience on the Eastern front. At times he runs a radio and others he grabs his rifle and returns fire on advancing Russians. This is where the book really finds its stride. The first person account of the infantry war with Russia is fairly rare among history books. Interestingly enough, while he was on the Eastern front, the author's mother was playing a

role in the resistance by hiding Jews within her own home. It is unclear how many lives she saved. But one thing is clear, it was deadly serious work. With one slip up the entire family could have been guilty of a major crime. She was a remarkably strong willed woman and it was interesting to learn something about her experiences in the war. I'll leave the end of the book for the reader to enjoy. But the end is fairly typical of many of the experiences of German soldiers at the end of the war. The book does a great job of explaining the fall of Germany and conditions people endured. It shows the clear heavy loss the people suffered. For more information regarding the end of the war in Germany I would strongly suggest reading *Für Volk und Führer* by Erwin Bartman. I would also suggest reading the classic *The Forgotten Soldier* by Guy Sajer for more first person accounts of the German experience in World War Two on the Eastern front.

Approximately 150,000 Jewish soldiers served in Hitler's Wehrmacht in World War II. This is the story of one such soldier, Georg Rauch, from Austria. It is a very well written and moving story. Rauch served on the Eastern Front until he was captured. He served a number of years in Soviet prison camps and was fortunate to be amongst the first group of German soldiers released by the Red Army. Of the millions of Hitler's soldiers captured by the Russians, only a very small percentage survived to return to Germany. This book is highly recommended for those interested in the fate of German Jews in World War II, the Wehrmacht, and the Eastern Front.

This memoir is heartbreaking and in knowing what was done to his folk in general I can not imagine how he feels about his role in this hell of time. This book is - in my opinion - a must read for all students, so this generation will remind what a war can do to everyone, friend or foe. I recommend this book 100%.

I enjoyed the perspective of this book. It was written from the viewpoint of a "normal" person who had to fight in a war in which he did not believe, in fact, he was against it. I would have loved to learn more about his mother's activities- while the author was consigned to Hitler's army, she was rescuing Jews. Love that.

I have been brought up reading and hearing about WWII from the American point of view. *Unlikely Warrior* gave me a look at the German army battling on the Russian front. It points out that our enemies suffered as much as our troops did and the war through the eyes of the common soldier. A great book.

An uplifting story about a Jewish Soldier in Hitler's Army? This was not what I expected. I felt that there would be a lot of sadness and self pity, but Rauch seems like he was a really positive man in his youth. I have bought this book for several people because I think that it is a good story about the horrors and realities of war while offering a lot of grit, positivity, and problem solving.

Besides being a great story about a soldier in unusual circumstances, it is the most visceral description of combat that I have ever read. After you have started, I dare you to try and put it down. Don't do as I did and start it at 10:00 at night. I read straight through until 5:00 AM.

...you find a book that can capture your teenage child's mind and yours. My teenager & I read this book independently of each other. We both found something in this book that we could discuss & learn from. Thank you Georg for writing & Phyllis for the transcription.

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