





The fading memories of a living well-known German from the Nazi era, World Heavyweight Champion from 1930 to 1932, Max Schmeling, usually have it that he was a willing model for Adolf Hitler and The Third Reich, the self-proclaimed Aryan Superman. Schmeling may indeed have lunched with Hitler and had lengthy conversations with Goebbels, master propagandist of the Nazi regime, but his tale is far more complex than it first appears.

The story of Max Schmeling is the story of a hero, who during the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938, saved the lives of two young Jewish brothers named Lewin. A decent man in conflict with the Nazi regime and racial policies of Hitler's Third Reich - and a man who demonstrated extraordinary generosity, righteousness and humanitarianism. Yet Schmeling never once revealed his heroism ..

## Max Schmeling

Max Schmeling was a shy man of extremely humble origins who came of age amidst the glitter and turbulence of Berlin's 'Golden Twenties'. As the heavyweight champion of Europe, his career inevitably brought him to America. Arriving in New York he won the world title after victories over Johnny Risko and Jack Sharkey in 1930. He defended it the next year but lost it to Sharkey in '32 in a blatantly unfair decision. Four years later,

he was imported as a sacrificial lamb for the invincible Joe Louis. Although a 10-1 underdog, Max Schmeling scored what some consider the upset of the century.

Joe Louis won the rematch on 22 June, 1938, in one of the most discussed fights of all time - and also one of the briefest. The fight was portrayed as the battle of the Aryan versus the Black, a struggle of evil against good ..

### Schmeling and Hitler

During the '36 Olympics Max Schmeling exacted a promise from Hitler that all U.S. athletes would be protected. On several occasions Hitler tried to cajole the respected boxer into joining the Nazi Party, but Schmeling vigorously refused ever to join the Nazi party or to publicize the Nazi propaganda line. Over Goebbels' personal protest, he refused to stop associating with German Jews or to fire his American Jewish manager, Joe Jacobs.

In an article, published in History Today, two professors at the University of Rhode Island, Robert Wiesbord and Norbert Heterich, tell how Schmeling agreed to hide the two teenage sons of a Jewish friend of his, David Lewin, during the awful time of Krystallnacht, November 1938 when Nazi pogroms against the Jews reached new heights.

He kept the Lewin boys, Henry and Werner, in his apartment at the Excelsior Hotel in Berlin, leaving word at the desk that he was ill and no one was to visit him. Later, when the rage of hate died down a little bit, did Schmeling help them flee the country to safety. They escaped and came to the United States where one of them, Henri Lewin, became a prominent hotel owner. This episode remained under shrouds until 1989, when Henry Lewin invited Schmeling to Las Vegas to thank him for saving his life. To this day, Henri Lewin believes that he and his brother owe their lives to Max Schmeling and he is convinced that Schmeling himself could have died for his humanitarian gesture.

Hitler never forgave Schmeling for refusing to join the Nazi party, so he had him drafted into the Paratroops and sent him on suicide missions.

After World War 2 Schmeling fought five times and though he never made the top 10, he made enough money to purchase the Coca-Cola dealership that he still operates. He is known as one of the most generous philanthropists in Germany today.

Schmeling treasured camaraderie and friendship and somehow, each of his ring opponents became his friend. He regularly and quietly gave the down-and-out Joe Louis gifts of money, and the friendship continued after death: Schmeling paid for the funeral.