

# MY FATHER MARCEL REICH-RANICKI

Andrew Ranicki

<http://www.maths.ed.ac.uk/~aar>

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

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## **Timeline 1920 – 1950 : Survival**

- ▶ 2nd June 1920. Born in Włocławek, Poland as Marcel Reich.
- ▶ 1929 – 1938. Berlin.
- ▶ November 1938. Deported to Poland.
- ▶ November 1940 – 3rd February 1943. Warsaw Ghetto.
- ▶ 22nd July 1942. Marries Tosia (Teofila) Langnas.
- ▶ 3rd February 1943 – 7th September 1944. Marcel and Tosia hidden by Polish family until liberation by the Red Army.
- ▶ 1944 – 1949. Joins Polish Communist Party. Changes name to Marceli Ranicki. Works for the Polish government in Warsaw, Berlin and London.
- ▶ 30th December 1948. Son Andrzej Aleksander (Andrew Alexander) born in London.

## Timeline 1950 – 2013 : Literature

- ▶ 1950–1958. Warsaw. German literature critic, editor and translator.
- ▶ 1958. Moves from Poland to Germany. Changes name to Marcel Reich-Ranicki.
- ▶ 1959–1973. Hamburg, at *“Die Zeit”*.
- ▶ 1973–2013. Frankfurt, at the *“Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”*.
- ▶ 1988–2011. Own TV show *“Literarisches Quartett”*.
- ▶ 1999. Publication of autobiography *“Mein Leben”*.
- ▶ 29th April 2011. Tosia dies in Frankfurt.
- ▶ 27th January 2012. Addresses Bundestag on the annual *Remembrance Day for the Victims of Nazism*.
- ▶ 18th September 2013. Dies in Frankfurt.

### Marcel's parents

**David Reich (1880-1942) and Helene Auerbach (1884-1942)**



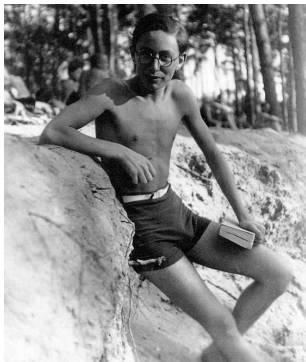
**Marcel with sister Gerda, brother Aleksander  
and mother Helene in Włocławek, 1928**



- ▶ Portrait of Gerda Boehm (her married name) by cousin Frank Auerbach currently on show at the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh.

## Berlin, 1929 – 1938.

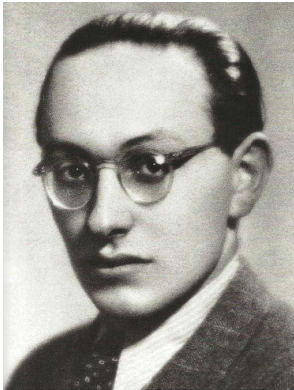
- ▶ In Berlin Marcel learned German, and against the odds acquired an abiding deep knowledge of German culture: language, literature, theatre and music.



- ▶ **Film clip #1** from *“Ich, Reich-Ranicki”*, a 2006 German TV documentary by Lutz Hachmeister.



**Marcel meets Tosia in the Warsaw Ghetto  
21st January, 1940.**

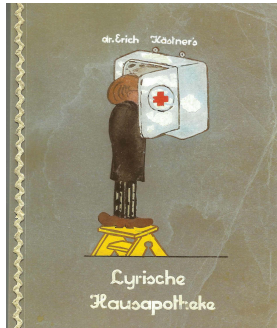


- ▶ **Film clip #2** Marcel describes their first meeting, from *"Ich, Reich-Ranicki"*.



## Birthday gift from Tosia to Marcel for his 21st birthday, 2nd June 1941.

- ▶ Tosia copied out and illustrated the poem collection  
*“Dr. Erich Kästner’s Lyrical Medicine Chest”*



- ▶ In 1957 Marcel showed the book to Erich Kästner, who was very moved that his poems were treasured in the Warsaw Ghetto.

**"Wir sitzen alle im gleichen Zug.  
Und viele im falschen Coupé."**

*"We are all sitting in the same train.  
But many of us in the wrong coach."*

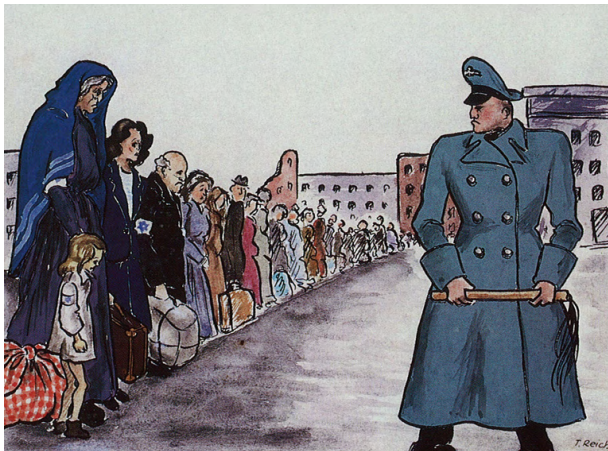


## Address to the Bundestag, 27th January, 2012.



- ▶ **Film clip #3.** Beginning of address.

**Drawing by Tosia (1942)**  
**"Waiting at the Umschlagplatz for the  
transport to Treblinka"**



**February 1943 – September 1944.  
Hidden by Bolek and Genia Gawin outside Warsaw.  
Liberation by Red Army.**



- ▶ Bolek: *“Adolf Hitler, the mightiest man in Europe, has decreed that these people should die. I, a simple typesetter from Warsaw, have decided that they should live. Let us see which of us will win.”*

**Extract from the 2009 German film “My Life”  
based on Marcel’s autobiography**

- ▶ A still from the film, with Matthias Schweighöfer as Marcel, and Katharina Schüttler as Tosia.



- ▶ [Film clip #4](#) Extract.

**September 1944 - November 1949.  
Communist. Polish Army and Diplomatic Service.**

- ▶ In Poland, Germany and Great Britain.
- ▶ 1948. Leads Polish delegation at the grave of Karl Marx in the Highgate Cemetery in London:



- ▶ November 1949. Recalled to Poland, and expelled from the Communist Party on account of *"ideological alienation"*.

**My parents and myself, London, 1949.**





**My parents and myself, Warsaw, 1957.**



## Germany, 1958-2013. Star literary critic

- ▶ 1958-1959 Frankfurt. Writes for the "*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*", "*Die Welt*" and others.
- ▶ 1959-1973 Hamburg. Writes for "*Die Zeit*".
- ▶ 1973-2013 Frankfurt. Literary editor of the "*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*" 1973-1988, columnist 1989-2013.



**SPIEGEL cover #1 “The Terminator” (1993)**

## SPIEGEL cover #2 "Weites Feld" by Günther Grass (1995)



## “Literarisches Quartett” TV show, 1988–2001

- ▶ Popular and influential book discussion show with four panelists, led by Marcel.
- ▶ 77 episodes in total, each 75 minutes long, with 5 books considered.
- ▶ Every episode started and ended with an extract from Beethoven’s Razumovsky Quartet op. 59, nr. 3, to commemorate the music and musicians Marcel and Tosia heard in the Warsaw Ghetto. [Film clip #5](#).
- ▶ [Film clip #6](#) from the episode of 24th August, 1995. Marcel criticizes the novel “*Weites Feld*” by Günther Grass, torn up in the SPIEGEL cover photomontage.

## Marcel and Tosia visit to Edinburgh, 1992

- ▶ Edinburgh landlady to Tosia, on seeing Marcel and being told that they have been married for 50 years:

*"You deserve the Victoria Cross!"*



## Autobiography “Mein Leben”, 1999



- ▶ Many editions and translations. Over 1.4 million copies sold.
- ▶ Recommended reading for schoolchildren in Germany.

## SPIEGEL cover #3 “What should one read?” (2001)





## The German TV Prize (2008)

- ▶ Marcel was awarded the lifetime achievement award at the annual German TV prize ceremony.



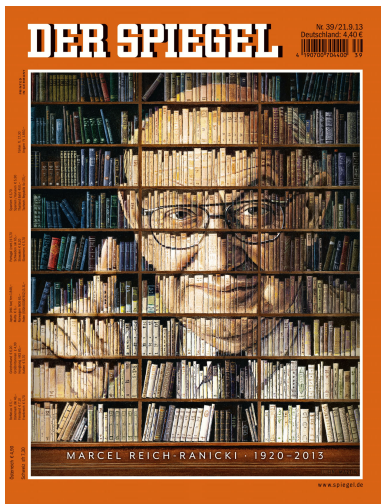
- ▶ [Film clip #7](#). Award ceremony

## Conclusion of the Bundestag address, 27th January, 2012.



► Film clip #8.

## SPIEGEL cover #4 Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1920-2013)



- ▶ *Der Literaturpapst = Pope of German Literature.*

## The grave of Marcel and Tosia at the Frankfurt Hauptfriedhof



## The Stolpersteine for Marcel's parents in Berlin

- ▶ Marcel's and Tosia's parents do not have graves.
- ▶ His parents have Stolpersteine on the pavement outside their 1930's Berlin home, Güntzelstrasse 53.



**Carla Helen Emily Ranicki (born 26th December 1979)  
and Nico Marcel Vallauri (born 4th March 2015)**

