MY FATHER MARCEL REICH-RANICKI

Andrew Ranicki

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

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society
22nd March, 2015
Timeline 1920 – 1950: Survival

- 2nd June 1920. Born in Włocławek, Poland as Marcel Reich.
- November 1938. Deported to Poland.
- 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.
- 30th December 1948. Son Andrzej Aleksander (Andrew Alexander) born in London.
Timeline 1950 – 2013 : Literature

- 1958. Moves from Poland to Germany. Changes name to Marcel Reich-Ranicki.
- 1999. Publication of autobiography “Mein Leben”.
- 29th April 2011. Tosia dies in Frankfurt.
- 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

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

- 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.
Berlin and Warsaw, 1938.

- After the Abitur from the Fichte Gymnasium in 1938 Marcel applied to study at Berlin University. The application letter with the annotations “Jewish” and “reject” survived:

- In fact, Marcel never studied at a university.
- After the Kristallnacht in November 1938 Marcel was deported from Berlin to Poland, along with all the other Jews of Polish nationality living in Germany.
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:

![Image](image_url)

- November 1949. Recalled to Poland, and expelled from the Communist Party on account of “ideological alienation”.

My parents and myself, Warsaw, 1957.
Germany, 1958-2013.
Star literary critic

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)