



The Association of Jewish Refugees

SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE

www.ajr.org.uk

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AJR plaque to honour Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) is delighted to announce it will be unveiling a special commemorative plaque in memory of Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck, the scholar, teacher and theologian who was a prominent leader of Progressive Judaism. The plaque will be unveiled at 11am on Tuesday 22 December 2015 at Colmore Court, 283 Watford Way, London NW4 4TQ; Rabbi Baeck lived in a house on this site between 1945 until his death in 1956.

Rabbi Baeck was born in what is today the Polish city of Leszno, near the border with Germany, but at the time of his birth in May 1873 was in the German Province of Posen.

After studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and philosophy in Berlin, he served as a rabbi in Oppeln, Düsseldorf and Berlin, where he also taught at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies. He was later a chaplain in the German Imperial Army during the First World War. His seminal work, *The Essence of Judaism*, was published in 1905 in response to Adolf von Harnack's *What is Christianity?*

He was President of the Umbrella organisation representing Germany Jewry, the Reich Representation of German Jews (later forcibly renamed as the Reich Association of Jews in Germany) from 1933 until his deportation to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia in 1943. Having refused various offers from the US to escape Nazi oppression because he did not wish to abandon his community, he became what has been referred to as the last representative of Jewry in Germany during the Holocaust. He was quoted as saying, "I will go when I am the last Jew alive in Germany".

In Theresienstadt he was the honorary head of the Council of Elders; he gave lectures and was active in the interfaith dialogue between Jews and Christians of Jewish origin and helped look after the younger prisoners.

After the war, Baeck relocated to London, where he accepted the Presidency of the North Western Reform Synagogue in Temple Fortune. He taught at the Hebrew Union College in America, and became Chairman of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. He died on 2 November 1956 in London.

The AJR represents and supports Jewish victims of Nazi oppression who rebuilt their lives in Britain. Alongside our social and welfare services we are committed to perpetuating the legacy of the refugees and are prominent supporters of several leading institutions engaged in Holocaust memorialisation in the UK.

AJR Trustee Frank Harding, said: “It is an enormous honour for us to commemorate the life of Rabbi Baeck, one of the principle Jewish thinkers of the 20th century whose work has helped shape the British Jewish community.”

Through our plaque scheme we are honouring prominent Jewish émigrés from Nazism who made a significant contribution to their adopted homeland. The plaque honouring Rabbi Baeck will follow the dedications we have already mounted to the biochemist and Nobel Prize winner Sir Hans Krebs and to Sir Ludwig Guttman, who founded the Paralympics. We have also installed a plaque in memory of the Cosmo restaurant in Swiss Cottage, a famous meeting place for the refugees.

We believe that these commemorative plaques will help form a tangible link between the illustrious earlier residents and the local community as well as fascinating residents and visitors. As well as being instructive and informative, they bring the past into the present, and they perpetuate the memory of the person being honoured.”

For further press information please contact Michael Newman:

Tel: 020 8385 3074

Fax: 020 8385 3075

Email: mnewman@ajr.org.uk

Website: www.ajr.org.uk

Notes on the AJR for Editors:

The AJR is the leading national charitable organisation exclusively delivering social, welfare and volunteer services to Jewish victims of Nazi oppression living in Great Britain.

The AJR supports Holocaust education and research projects and initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust.

The AJR has produced the ground-breaking audio-visual testimony archive, *Refugee Voices*. This collection of 150 filmed interviews creates a legacy of the experiences of the refugees and will advance and enhance Holocaust research for future generations. *Refugee Voices* enables Holocaust researchers and scholars to watch up to 450 hours of film and read fully edited and transcribed accounts. For the first time, researchers will also be assisted by time-codes that, together with a summary sheet and key words section, direct users to specific sections of the films. Details of *Refugee Voices* are at www.refugeevoices.co.uk

The AJR is part of the UK delegation to the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](http://www.ihra.org), which brings together governments and non-governmental organisations to raise awareness of the Holocaust and places political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research