

**Sandra Lipner**  
**Alexander Walther**  
**Günther Jikeli**  
**Pragya Kaul Guido**

**Leo Baeck Institute**  
**London**  
**Lecture Series 2026**

**Afterlives of the**  
**German Past**

## Afterlives of the German Past

Leo Baeck Institute London  
Lecture Series 2026

This year's lecture series explores the diverse ways in which the German past shapes its present – in memory, identity, and political culture. From the everyday complicity of the German bourgeoisie under National Socialism to Jewish life and Holocaust commemoration in the GDR, these lectures illuminate the lingering legacies and unresolved tensions of the 20th century. They also turn outwards, tracing the paths of German-speaking Jewish refugees outside Europe and questioning the persistence and transformation of antisemitism today. Together, they offer critical insights into the afterlife of the German past and its significance for the moral and political questions of our time.

Lectures in this series will be held at the German Historical Institute London, 17 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NJ, and will also be live streamed on Zoom. Admission is free, but places are strictly limited and must be reserved in advance via Eventbrite. Lectures will begin promptly; latecomers may not be admitted.

Zoom links will be shared with registered participants closer to the date of each event. Further details will be circulated via our mailing list, social media channels, and website ([www.lbilondon.ac.uk](http://www.lbilondon.ac.uk)).

**Sandra Lipner**  
*University College London, UK*  
**Bourgeois Germans and the Third Reich: How One Family Contributed to the Nazi Dictatorship**  
5.30pm, Thursday 21st May 2026

During the Third Reich, German political, social, economic, and private life was transformed to such an extent that the Holocaust became thinkable and, ultimately, possible. Yet many Germans maintained a 'not Nazi' subjectivity, drawing a line between themselves and overly zealous '150%' Nazis. This talk uses the extensive private collection of letters and documents of Annemarie and Heinrich Brenzinger, Sandra Lipner's great-grandparents from south-west Germany, to discuss why bourgeois Germans who were not enthusiastic about Hitler still willingly embraced the Third Reich.

Sandra Lipner is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in History at University College London, working on the AHRC/DFG project 'Good Citizens, Terrible Times: Notions of Individuality, Community and Responsibility in the Holocaust'. She completed her AHRC-funded PhD in History and German Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her work explores the use of ego-documents as sources for a history of mentalities of the Third Reich and the early postwar period. In 2023, she co-curated the exhibition 'Holocaust Letters' at the Wiener Holocaust Library, London.



**Alexander Walther**  
*State Museum of Archaeology Chemnitz, Germany*  
**Jewish Holocaust Memory and East German Antifascism**  
5.30pm, Thursday 22nd October 2026

What role did Jewish survivors in the German Democratic Republic play in the cultural debate on the Holocaust and National Socialism? How could Jewish experiences of persecution and antifascist convictions be negotiated and articulated in the face of history, politics, and state-imposed acts of remembrance? Drawing on personal documents and works by authors like Arnold Zweig and neglected historian Helmut Eschwege, the talk explores these questions and shows Jewish and, in some cases, non-Jewish actors' motivations and options for action. In doing so, the talk examines the tension between wilful action, negotiated compromises, and at times painful concessions to the state.

Alexander Walther received his PhD from the University of Jena in 2023. His book *Die Shoah und die DDR. Akteure und Aushandlungen im Antifaschismus* ('The Shoah and the GDR: Actors and negotiations in anti-fascism') was published by Wallstein in 2025 and is based on his doctoral dissertation.



**Günther Jikeli**  
*Indiana University, Bloomington, USA*  
**The German Case: What It Tells Us About Antisemitism Worldwide**  
5.30pm, Thursday 19th November 2026

Once the driving force of antisemitism worldwide, Nazi Germany waged war against Jews everywhere, radicalising antisemitism in word and deed. After 1945, Germany was pacified by the Allies, and open antisemitism became the antithesis of the new democratic *Staatsräson*. Yet today, antisemitism has returned – from the far right, parts of the radical left, Islamist movements, and the centre of society. This lecture examines the German case in a global context and asks whether the postwar *Staatsräson* – the commitment to Jewish life and Israel's security – can hold, and what this means for Europe and the wider Jewish diaspora.

Günther Jikeli is the Erna B. Rosenfeld Associate Professor for the Study of Antisemitism and Interim Director of the Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University Bloomington. His research focuses on contemporary antisemitism, conspiracy ideologies, and online hate speech in Europe and the United States.



**Pragya Kaul Guido**  
*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA*  
**Europeans in the Raj: German Jews and the Government of India Act, 1935**  
7.00pm, Thursday 3rd December 2026  
Online only lecture

How did German Jews experience life as refugees from Nazism in the British Empire? Scholars of the Holocaust have often turned to frameworks of racial triangulation to answer this question, emphasizing Jews' 'Other-ing' in Nazi Germany to place refugees 'in-between' the binaries of coloniser and colonised, European and non-European. This talk, however, takes a deep dive into the history of Indian constitutional development and legislative reform to understand the place of Holocaust refugees in the racialised socio-political hierarchy of the British Raj. Focusing on the Government of India Act, 1935, Kaul shows how German Jews became white Europeans in the British Raj. In doing so, she calls on scholars to reframe their attention to the essential contexts, at once local and imperial, that structured Holocaust 'refugeedom' in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

Pragya Kaul Guido is a doctoral candidate at the University of Michigan's Department of History and Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Her dissertation, *Refugees in Empire: The Holocaust and Britain's India*, has been supported by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the German Historical Institute, the Leo Baeck Institute, and the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes.



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