



CGES— A Year in Review

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A Letter from the Director

For almost two decades now CGES has been bringing programming about Germany to the Brandeis campus. A lot has changed in recent years. The early “noughts” from 2000 onwards were characterized by a discussion of fears about a growing nationalism in the newly united Germany, punctuated by a heated debate about Chancellor Gerhard Schröder’s proclamation that he was proud to be a German, and a controversial discussion of Leitkultur. Germans themselves proclaimed the change was most visible with a sea of German flags in the 2006 soccer world cup in Germany. The rest of the world seemed to come to terms with it during Germany’s historic 7:01 win over the Brazilian soccer team in the 2014 world championship. As German Ambassador Dr. Peter Wittig pointed out during his visit

to Brandeis in October, in 2015 Germany went through a verifiable roller-coaster of world opinion--from sharp criticism for its harsh economic austerity vis-a-vis Greece at the beginning of



Sabine von Mering

the year to exuberant praise for its welcome of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees. In December Chancellor Angela Merkel became only the fourth

German ever to be chosen for the coveted spot as Time Magazine’s person of the year. CGES Brandeis has been lucky in its steadfast support from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Max Kade Foundation., and the Fran and Otto Walter Foundation (see story on the final page) . In the 2015-2016 school year CGES focused on amplifying stories of everyday people in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. We hosted a series called Germany and Its 1 Million Refugees. We heard from multiple speakers who spoke about the experiences of Holocaust survivors. We explored the ever-evolving European Union and tackled the issue of climate change. We are excited to share with you this look into what we’ve done and what we’ve learned.

In The Shadow of the Holocaust: The Forgotten Survivors

August 31, 2015

Peter Schrag discussed how his new book weaves together his father’s memoirs and his own. He spoke of the inner struggle he went through to even allow himself to read his father’s memoirs. Schrag shared with atten-

dees the story surrounding his family’s 1941 escape from Europe and arrival in the United States.

He spoke on how his father began internment and he, his mother and grandmother tried to escape from Brussels. Schrag

said it was the kindness of strangers which allowed his family to escape. He shared stories of his mother’s great courage in crossing the line of demarcation multiple times to look for his father. Schrag’s parents were ultimately reunited on a train platform in Lisbon.

Framing the Past: Terezin Art & Family Memory

September 21, 2015

Rachel Gelfand is a PhD candidate in the Department of American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Rachel discussed how growing up surrounded by artwork created by Holocaust survivors had a strong impact on her life, which she did not fully recognize until later in her college years.

During the event she discussed the origins of multiple art

pieces. Gelfand shared how her analysis of the works in adulthood related to her childhood experiences with them.

Gelfand has a background in oral history and radio. She is interested in studying feminist and queer histories. Before returning to American Studies at the doctoral level, she produced radio pieces, deejayed radio shows, and worked on projects of public memory and oral history. In memory studies, she is pursuing a project

concerning a set of Holocaust drawings and intergenerational familial memory. She is originally from the greater Boston area and the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors Edgar and Hanna Krasa. Their grandson, Benjamin Meschede-Krasa, works as a CGES student assistant. CGES is grateful for his help in organizing this event.

A piece featured at the Framing the Past event

“Accepting large numbers of refugees was Germany’s only practical option.”

Germany’s Response to the Current European Migration Crisis

September 24, 2015

Bruce Leimsidor spoke about asylum law, the German intake process for refugees, and more. Professor Leimsidor also spoke about what has been touted as Germany’s generosity in taking in so many displaced people. He believes that accepting these people is the only practical thing which Germany could currently do. Leimsidor also discussed how he believed that much of

the crisis could have been avoided if the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had expanded its refugee resettlement programs. He emphasized that stories of death in transit and other traumas experienced by migrants have proven helpful in gaining public support for refugees in multiple countries. In Germany, asylum is given for a period of three years and then is up for renewal. If asylum is

not renewed, migrants will be sent back to their home country. Leimsidor also discussed Germany’s state-sponsored program to combat xenophobia. Bruce Leimsidor teaches European asylum law in Venice. He is a former senior resettlement expert for UNHCR.

Rio-Kyoto-Copenhagen-Paris: Will We Save the Planet?

October 26, 2015

German government investments have helped to dramatically reduce prices for solar and wind technology making them widely available, spurring a global renewable energy revolution. Germany, a country with neither much sunshine

nor much wind, is 50% renewably powered today. The Kyoto Protocol was approaching expiration, and from November 29 to December 12 UN delegations planned a meeting in Paris to reach a new global agreement. Countries made pledges in advance of the summit. Would they be

sufficient? Would an agreement, if indeed one was reached, have the ‘teeth’ to achieve what needs to be done to prevent catastrophic climate change? Dr. Herman Ott and Dr. Charles Chester discussed what we could expect from the United Nations Climate Summit.



Germany’s Role in Europe Today: German Ambassador Dr. Peter Wittig



October 29, 2015

In 2015 Germany has experienced a roller coaster of media attention. Accused of inflexibility and lack of empathy vis-a-vis Greece in the Euro Crisis, Germany was praised

Ambassador Wittig

for its diplomacy vis-a-vis Russia and Ukraine and has lately experienced a wave of sympathy in the wake of its acceptance of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria. This development shows clearly: Germany is in the spotlight and is – 25 years after unification – slowly emerging into a more active role in Europe and around the world.

Ambassador Dr. Peter Wittig

joined CGES to discuss how Germans view these new developments. He discussed with attendees Germany’s new role in Europe’s several crises going forward. He also shared what actions he believed Germany would take to deal with the massive influx of immigrants into the country following unrest in countries outside of Europe. He stressed the importance of a strong transatlantic alliance and the importance of German– American relations.

“As a solo show, the play makes for a wonderful showcase for the smarts and talents of Nancy E. Carroll”- Fuse Theater Review

Dramatic Reading of Savyon Liebrecht’s “Strawberry Girl” with Nancy E. Carrol

November 5, 2015

A German woman and her son Ludwig live in Poland, where her husband works at a ‘factory’. Their lives change after she meets a Jewish girl who grows strawberries, as big as a man’s fist. “The play deals with the confrontation of blissful ignorance and a tragic personal intimacy. As a solo show, the play makes for a wonderful showcase for the smarts

and talents of Nancy E.Carroll. The Strawberry Girl marks the start of Israeli Stage’s sixth outing with the work of Savyon Liebrecht, as well as the opening of its sixth season -- a line-up that Guy Ben-Aharon is dedicating exclusively to female playwrights” read more at ArtsFuse.org.



Nov. 9, 1989-Oct. 3, 1990: Sind wir ein Volk? Are We One People?

November 3, 2015

Antonie Eickelberg moderated a panel to discuss German reunification. Panelists included Professor Joyce Mushaben, ARD’s Sandra Ratzow and Dianna Erinna of Northeastern University. One of the most amazing things about Germany’s reunification was its speed. Joyce Mushaben gave a

history of critical events which influenced two countries becoming one. Events like these made Helmut Kohl realize unification wouldn’t take a decade or more like many people thought. He’d have to take fast action or he would be left behind. One of the biggest differences was that West Germany was individualistic while East Germany had a more collective

identity. Panelists also pointed to models of best practices within each Germany with regard to universal preschool and women’s liberation.



Combating European Anti-Semitism: Tomorrow's Vision



November 10, 2015

In commemoration of the 'Kristallnacht' Pogrom of 1938, CGES co-sponsored a panel discussion. Following the attack on Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish supermarket in Paris this spring, worldwide outrage led to a fighting call against anti-semitism.

movements and parties are attracting (often very young) supporters all over the continent, Jews of Europe are facing an ever-growing threat.

Panelists discussed how Europeans are dealing with the emerging threat and what countries can do to stop young people from supporting these radical groups.

Panelists included Rob Leikind of the American Jewish Committee Boston, Judith Vichniac of the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University and David Gurevich of the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem.

The event was co sponsored by the Brandeis-Genesis Institute for Russian Jewry.

As right-wing extremist

Combating European Anti-Semitism Event Poster

“Glückliche Menschen haben ein schlechtes Gedächtnis und reiche Erinnerungen”- Thomas Brussig, Sonnenallee

German and Russian Flags



CAMPUSWEEKS Film Series

October 6-28, 2015

As part of this year's CAMPUSWEEKS program, sponsored by the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of German unification, CGES presented a German Film Series in cooperation with the Goethe Institut Boston.

The series was presented in

three parts: East and West Germany Before Unification, During Unification and After Unification. Seven films were screened. Students had the opportunity to come and learn about how Germany has changed in the last 25 years through film.

The first two films were Sonnenallee and B Movie, which explored East and

West Berlin respectively, before unification. Deutschlandspiel, Das Leben der Anderen and Goodbye Lenin portrayed aspects of life in a divided Germany. Finally, Wir Sind Jung, Wir sind Stark and Alles auf Zucker explored topics such as the life of minorities and xenophobia in a united Germany.

How Germany Fell Out of Love with Russia

January 25, 2016- Dr. Jörg Forbrig spoke about what he described as “the most turbulent times in Europe which many of us will ever see”. He explained how Germany's reaction to Russia's actions in

Ukraine surprised the rest of the world. Suddenly Germany was a critic of Russia, which is in opposition to the close relationship which the two countries had formed over the years. Dr. Forbrig noted many questioned Germany's commitment to its smaller neighbors, but have been paci-

fied by Germany's recent position which classifies Russian actions as unacceptable.

Dr. Forbrig also noted that Russia is a reminder to Germany, that it may be behind in critical areas, such as cybersecurity. He also noted that Germany is unprepared for a possible Russian collapse.

Goethe in Song and Opera: A Master Set to Music



**Johann
Wolfgang
von
Goethe**

February 10, 2016

Brandeis University and the Boston Lyric Opera collaborated to explore Goethe's works in song and

opera. The pieces were set by Mozart, Schubert, Berlioz and others. The program interspersed text and music. CGES director Sabine von

Mering gave insight into Goethe's life and work between musical numbers. First was Schubert's Gretchen am Spinnrade, followed by Der Erlkönig. Faites-lui mes aveux was next followed by Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt from

Tchaikovsky. The final piece was Act III Scene , Oui, c'est moi. Heather Gallagher, mezzo-soprano, and Omar Najmi, tenor, performed pieces individually and the final piece together. They were accompanied on the piano by Brett Hodgdon.

"You shouldn't try to hold an independent

sovereign

nation in an

organization

against its will."

-Prime Minister

David Cameron

It's Complicated: Britain, EU and their Relationship Status

March 9, 2016—Why did Prime Minister David Cameron call for a referendum on the future of Britain in the EU? Siegfried Weichlein, Professor of Contemporary European History at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland presented an overarching context and history of the British political

sphere, shedding light on the origins of the coming referendum. Ultimately, the UK is bound to the European Continent by thousands of agreements, which can't be renegotiated overnight and would have to be abided by regardless of EU membership if the UK wants access to the European mar-

ket. Professor Weichlein argued that leaving the EU would give the UK less influence over policy decisions made in Brussels and would do more harm than good for the British political position. Professor Weichlein is currently a visiting scholar at the Minda de Gunzburg Center Studies at Harvard.

Germany and Its 1 Million Refugees Part I: Conversations with Eyewitnesses, Jacobia Dahm

February 2, 2016

Photojournalist Jacobia Dahm joined CGES to share her experiences in Berlin, Turkey, Greece and the Balkans with Syrian refugees. Dahm described conditions refugees face registering on their way to new countries; with waits as long as 10 hours. She described

refugees being beaten, separated from family members, and denied legal aid. Dahm also spoke of university students failing exams to avoid being drafted by the army and hoping to save enough money to leave. Dahm spoke about the ethics of photojournalism and explained struggles journalists face

in determining when to do their job and when to put the camera/pen down and help. She summed up this feeling, "Sometimes you don't know how important the picture you don't take is."



Students, faculty and visitors listen to Jacobia Dahm

Germany and Its 1 Million Refugees Part II: Arriving as a Syrian Refugee

February 29, 2016

CGES welcomed Ibrahim Shkhess via Skype to talk about his experience in Germany as a refugee. Before attendees heard from him, CGES Director Sabine von Mering explained the context behind the current refugee crisis and how Germans are dealing with it. In Altena, Germany for example, each refugee is assigned a *kümmerer* or careperson.

Following the introduction,

Ibrahim Shkhess shared his personal story. He is 22 years old and living in Augsburg, Germany. He shares a house with fifteen other people. Before fleeing Syria, he was in his last year of college and studying network engineering. Unfortunately, his university was bombed before he had the chance to take final exams. That was when he knew it was time to leave. He only had three choices, he said. He could join the army, refuse to join and sufferer the conse-

quences, or flee.

Ibrahim recently started a practicum with a German computer company. In addition, he is taking German classes financed by the government. He hopes to complete his degree in Germany as he was only four credits shy of graduation.

When asked if he wanted to return to Syria eventually, Ibrahim's answer was an enthusiastic yes. He misses the food and weather from his hometown.



Ibrahim Shkhess sharing his story via Skype

“Despite what’s been heard, the New Years Eve attackers in Cologne were not Syrian refugees.”

Germany and Its 1 Million Refugees Part III: Community Policing and the Refugee Crisis

March 8, 2016- Joachim Kersten is a senior research professor at Hochschule der Polizei (Policy Academy) in Muenster, Germany who spoke with attendees via Skype. He began by giving an overview of the history of migration to Germany, from the 17th century to the arrival of guestworkers in the mid 20th century.

Kersten explained why Germany is seen as an ideal place for immigrants. He cited the good chances which immigrants usually have of being accepted, Germany's strong economy, favorable labor market and overall welcoming atmosphere. He noted, however, that some of this has changed since the Cologne New Years Eve attacks. Ker-

sten pointed out, however, that the NYE attackers were not refugees. Kersten shared what it takes to become a police officer. As a basic requirement, trainees must have two years of training in psychology, law, communication and more. To get a promotion, they must get a bachelor's degree. In some localities, this degree is the minimum.

The Paris Agreement & Global Climate Justice

Did you know?

262 million people were affected by climate disasters in 2004, more than 98 per cent of them in developing countries



March 15, 2016- Herman Ott of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy joined Mihaela Papa and Joseph K. Assan, both of Brandeis' Heller School, to provide a political and legal

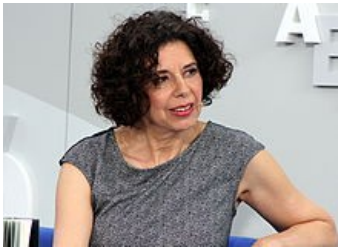
overview of the Paris agreement.

Panelists believed Paris was able to overcome the Copenhagen disaster and create an environment for constructive negotiations. Panelists agreed one problem of the agreement is the proposals are unenforceable and based on the goodwill of

countries.

Panelists also explained their criteria for assessing the agreement, shared ways to deal with damage compensations and discussed whether there could ever be real consequences for large corporate polluters.

Germany and Its 1 Million Refugees Part IV: Fled-Newly Arrived-Immigrated



March 30, 2016

Esther Discherheit is a Jewish-German poet who splits her time between Vienna and Berlin. There is a home for refugees a few blocks from the University for Applied

**Poet
Esther
Discherheit**

Arts where she works in Vienna. She shared several stories which she has collected from the people who live there. She detailed experiences crossing borders in the middle of the night. She spoke about problems refugees face which most people would not consider. For example, Germany offers refugees free German lessons to help them integrate. Unfortunately, those refugees who

have settled in small town which are far from city centers often can't afford transportation to these classes, for which no subsidy is provided. Discherheit also spoke about what communities have done to help refugees. She explained the importance of art and education in bringing people together. Inspired by [Black Mountain College](#), in the United States, she hopes to create an art school which would allow refugees and native Germans and/or Austrians to work and learn together.

“The European Dream is no longer widely shared.”

The EU & its Multiple Crises: The End of Great Dreams

April 12, 2016

Former CGES director George Ross discussed why he believes the European Dream will no longer hold. He began by discussing the history of the European Dream and reasoning behind the creation of the EU. He then explained the EU's three current largest crises: Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis and Brexit. Ross believes that the multi-

ple simultaneous crises combined with weakened poor countries within the EU and questionable decisions such as conditional bailout loans contributed to the erosion of the European Dream.

Despite the EU being highly inter-governmental with regard to key issues, its individual members are deeply divided. France and Germany are being held up as

countries to shape the future of the Union, but France is weak and Germany is resented for its leadership.

Ross considered hard right parties a strong sign of breakdown. Though Ross claimed he did not have a full answer about what would happen, he acknowledged that EU institutions could survive, even if few people approve of them.

Germany and its 1 Million Refugees, Conversations with Eye-Witnesses Part V: An Iranian Refugee and her German Teacher

April 19, 2016- Lotte Pellens and her former German student Narges spoke with attendees via Skype from Brühl, Germany. Narges is a women's rights activist from Iran. Lotte and Narges met when Lotte taught German as part of an integration course for refugees.

Narges shared her story of her escape from Iran, deportation and

finally being granted asylum in Germany. Narges left Iran for both political and religious reasons. She was opposed to the way women were treated in Iran and also felt persecuted as a Christian. She initially came to Germany via Turkey and Italy, but was deported to Italy. She again returned to Germany and sought church asylum while she waited to hear about asylum. She

shared stories of the kindness of Brühl's residents while she was confined in the church. She also shared her struggle with mental health issues and spoke of how local residents helped her survive the hard times.



Lotte Pellens and Narges



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Newsletter created by Erin Robinson
with help from the CGES team

The Center for German and European Studies at Brandeis University (CGES) was founded in 1997 with generous gifts from the German government and Brandeis University, and dedicated in May 1998 by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. CGES's mission is to support interdisciplinary teaching and research on contemporary Germany and Europe at Brandeis and to reach out to broader communities on the social, political, and cultural issues facing Germany and Europe today. Brandeis CGES is well-placed to promote productive dialogue among many different voices about key issues in German and European societies and to increase American understanding of contemporary European developments.



About Our Sponsors

The Otto and Fran Walter Foundation located in Boothbay Harbor, ME is one of CGES' committed partners. The foundation is named for Dr. Otto Walter, a humanist, intellectual, and artist, and his wife, Frances Doonan Walter, a watercolorist and ardent philanthropist. Together they founded [The Otto and Fran Walter Foundation](#), which supports organizations promoting German-American relations, Jewish heritage, higher education, and co-existence. CGES is grateful to the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation for its generous support enabling us to host events that highlight German-American reconciliation, a cause to which Dr. Otto Walter dedicated his life.

Dr. Otto L. Walter was born in Bavaria in 1907. A practicing lawyer, he was disbarred when the Nazi government forbade Jews from professional employment. He later immigrated with his parents to New York, where he worked as an accountant and opened his own firm. He later at-

tended New York Law School and was awarded his J.D. in 1954. Dr. Walter and his law partner, Henry Conston, founded their law firm in 1955. That law firm, formerly known as Walter, Conston and Schurtman, is today part of Alston & Bird, LLP. Dr. Walter was one of very few attorneys allowed to practice law in both Germany and the United States.



He advised the German Ministry of Finance and was co-author of the definitive four-volume work on the German American Tax Treaty. He was troubled by the discord between his two nations and worked passionately to bring more amicable relations. He was rewarded with Germany's Grand Cross of the Order of Merit in 1980 and by his adopted country in 1999 when Mayor Rudy Giuliani named him one of New York City's Ageless Achievers.

Dr. and Mrs. Walter's legacy is carried on by the Foundation's current leadership, President Frank Helman, an international tax lawyer and Vice President Marty Peake, a leader in the Rotary movement. Together, they bring vision, commitment, and passion to the Foundation's work in furthering German-American relations, Jewish culture, arts and culture, coexistence and education and we at CGES are proud to partner in this work.