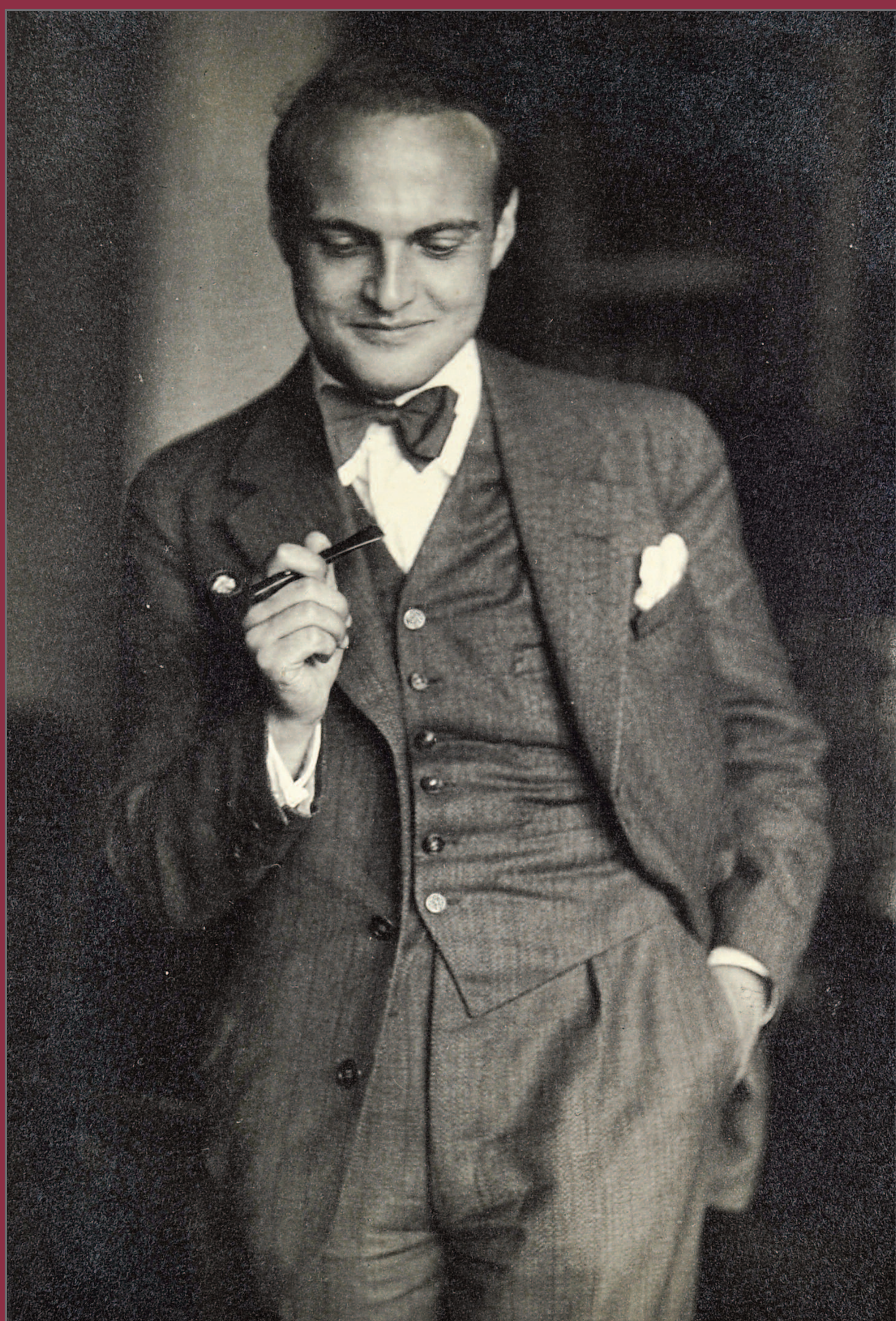


# Sebastian Haffner 1907–1999



The Pretzel family in the schoolyard of the Municipal Double School on Prenzlauer Allee: Bernd, Raimund, parents Wanda and Carl Louis Albert, Eva and Ulrich Pretzel (from left), c. 1917  
BArch N2523/237 Figure 1



Raimund Pretzel in 1932

After Raimund Pretzel had given up his legal activity in 1936, he worked as a columnist for the Ullstein publishing house. He had written travelogues („Rheinsberg“) and commentaries („On the Vice of Smoking“) for the Vossische Zeitung as early as 1933 and wrote book reviews for the magazines „Die Dame“ and „Die Koralle“ starting in the mid-thirties. A collection of his early features was published in the volume „The Lives of Pedestrians“ in 2004.

BArch N2523/231 Figure 1

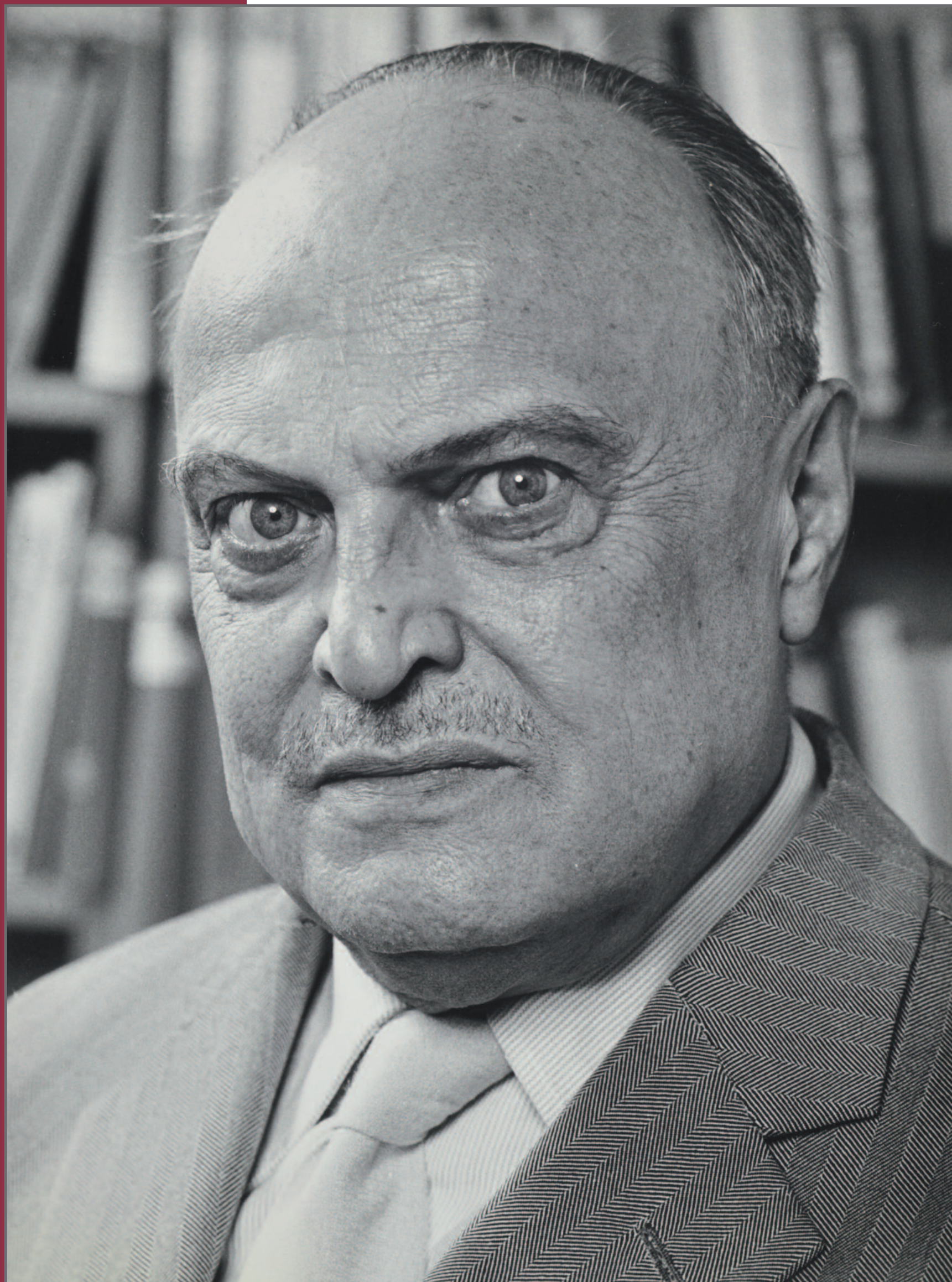
*„Of exemplary clarity.“*

Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1920–2013, author and literary critic) on Sebastian Haffner  
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27 September 2009



Sebastian Haffner (right) in conversation with the author and editor Joachim C. Fest (1926–2006).

Private



Sebastian Haffner at the 30th Frankfurt Book Fair, 1978

BArch N2523/230 Figure 34 / dpa-Wieseler, Heinz

*Sebastian Haffner was a „role model (...) as a democrat, as a patriot and as a historical teacher. (...)*

*For him, historiography was an art“.*

Peter Bender (1923–2008, historian and publicist) on the occasion of the naming of the Education and Culture Centre on 12 December 2007.



Class photo with Raimund Pretzel (1st row, 2nd from right), around 1920

Private

The publicist and writer **Sebastian Haffner**, whose real name was Raimund Pretzel, grew up as the youngest child of Wanda and Carl Louis Albert Pretzel in the rector's house of the Municipal Double School on Prenzlauer Allee. His father had been rector of the 105th Boys' School there since 1908. Raimund Pretzel started school here in 1914. Starting in 1917 he attended the Königsstädtische Gymnasium on Alexanderplatz.

Following his father's advice, Raimund Pretzel studied law in Berlin despite his literary leanings and completed his legal clerkship at the Berlin Court of Appeals. He left the civil service in 1936 for political reasons. From then on he earned his living as a journalist. In 1938 Raimund Pretzel followed his Jewish friend Erika Schmidt-Landry (1899–1969) into exile in England. With the publication of his first book „Germany: Jekyll and Hyde“ in 1940 the English public became aware of Raimund Pretzel. Out of concern for his family members in Germany he published the book under the pseudonym Sebastian Haffner.

In 1954 Haffner returned to Berlin as a correspondent for the British Sunday newspaper „Observer“. He became known to the German public as a „British journalist“ in Werner Höfer's (1913–1997) „Internationalem Frühschoppen“. In the sixties and seventies Haffner wrote columns for „Christ und Welt“, „Die Welt“, and „Stern“, as well as „konkret“, a magazine. In addition to his work as a journalist, Haffner also increasingly wrote non-fiction books. With his historical essays he reached an audience of millions, not least because of his ability to describe politics and history with concise words in a clear, entertaining and pointed manner.

On the initiative of Sarah Haffner (1940–2018), the cultural and educational centre on Prenzlauer Allee has borne the name of her father, Sebastian Haffner, since 12 December 2007. A memorial plaque commemorating Haffner was erected in 2008 at Ehrenbergstraße 33 in Berlin-Dahlem, where Haffner lived starting in 1954.

*„A man of strong sentiments“*

Arnulf Baring (born 1932, historian and journalist) on Sebastian Haffner  
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14 March 2002

Kultur- und Bildungszentrum  
Sebastian Haffner