

PREFACE

The state of transatlantic ties has been the subject of intense discussion—between governments, in the press, and among ordinary citizens—on both sides of the ocean in the wake of the U.S.-led war to topple Saddam Hussein. German-American relations have received particular attention in this discussion. How could allies who had cooperated so effectively for so long find themselves so divided? This question bears directly on the central concerns of the GHI. The history of German-American relations and of the post-1945 Atlantic community have long been focal points of the GHI's research program. Building on this scholarly strength, the GHI organized several events that examined the German-American impasse over Iraq from a historical perspective.

It was as a long-time champion of close German-American political cooperation that former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt came to Washington to speak his mind on the most important issues the international community currently faces, not least the tension in European-American relations. Schmidt's talk on "The Global Situation: A European Point of View" was the fourth in the series of lectures dedicated to the memory of Gerd Bucerius, the politician-publisher who founded the influential weekly *DIE ZEIT*. Schmidt drew an audience of over 600 people that filled the hall rented for the occasion to capacity. The GHI is grateful to Chancellor Schmidt for accepting the invitation to speak in Washington and the Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius ZEIT Foundation for making this event possible.

German-American ties past and present figured prominently in the lecture "My Germany: Reflections on My Country Before and After 1989" that Jens Reich delivered at the GHI's October 3 symposium on German unification. Professor Reich, a leading figure in the East German civil liberties movement and a candidate for the German presidency in 1994, recalled the importance of U.S. backing for East Germany's peaceful revolution and German unification, and offered a thoughtful analysis of the differences in German and American foreign policy interests. The text of Reich's lecture is available on the GHI's website at www.ghi-dc.org/reich_text_2003.html. The GHI would like to thank E.ON North America for generously sponsoring the October 3 symposium and Georg O. Budenbender, president of E.ON North America, for joining us on that occasion.

The disagreement between Berlin and Washington was not the only German-American aspect of the discussion of Iraq. Even before the fighting began, the Allied occupation of Germany after 1945 was frequently cited as an example that could offer a lesson for remaking post-Saddam

Iraq as a liberal democracy. Just what that lesson might be was the subject of the symposium "How Valid Are Comparisons? The American Occupation of Germany Revisited," jointly organized by the Washington office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the GHI and hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The participants explored the situation confronting the U.S. as it attempted to foster the creation of a new democratic order following the collapse of the Third Reich. In the process, they called attention to some of the fundamental differences separating the German and Iraqi experiences. An overview of this discussion appears in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

In trying to explain the disagreement over Iraq, commentators in both Germany and the U.S. have pointed to deep-rooted differences in the two countries' political cultures. One fascinating difference lies in the evolving and multifaceted understandings of freedom that have developed over the centuries, the subject of the GHI Annual Lecture delivered by Eric Foner of Columbia University and the response offered by Jürgen Kocka of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin. Underscoring the mutability of the concept of freedom, Foner called attention to the vigorous debate over civil liberties and the meaning of freedom in the U.S. in the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks. His lecture and Kocka's observations on the German idea of freedom are featured in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Another German-American comparison featured in this *Bulletin* centers on the interests, training, and roles of professional historians in the two countries. We spoke with James McPherson in November 2003 as his term as president of the American Historical Association was coming to a close and with Manfred Hildermeider, chairman of the Verband der Historikerinnen und Historiker Deutschlands, a month later. They were asked to comment upon the trends that have shaped historical study in recent decades and to describe the place of their respective organizations within the academic cultures of their countries. Set side by side, the interviews point to many shared concerns as well as some fundamental points of difference.

Finally, it is a pleasure to call attention to the contributions by Chad Carl Bryant and Jeffrey T. Zalar to this issue of the *Bulletin*. Bryant and Zalar were the 2003 recipients of the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize awarded annually by the Friends of the German Historical Institute for the best dissertations on German history submitted to North American universities. The Friends provide invaluable support to the GHI's efforts to promote scholarly exchange between Germany and the United States. All of us on the staff of the GHI owe the Friends a debt of gratitude.

Christof Mauch
Director