

**HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONALIZATION:  
THE HISTORICAL PROFESSION AT THE BEGINNING OF  
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY  
SYMPOSIUM IN HONOR OF DETLEF JUNKER**

Symposium at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), University of Heidelberg, June 25, 2004. Sponsored by the Heidelberg Center for American Studies. One panel co-sponsored by the GHI. Convener: Philipp Gassert (Heidelberg).

Participants: Manfred Berg (Center for U.S. Studies, Wittenberg), Georg Christoph Berger Waldenegg (Heidelberg), Volker Berghahn (Columbia University), Marion Breunig (Heidelberg), Reinhard R. Doerries (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg), Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht (Center for North American Studies, Frankfurt), Akira Iriye (Harvard University), Detlef Junker (Heidelberg), Egbert Klautke (University of London), Robert Gerald Livingston (GHI), Christof Mauch (GHI), Wilfried Mausbach (Heidelberg), Kees van Minnen (Roosevelt Study Center), Kiran Klaus Patel (Humboldt University), Christiane Rösch (Heidelberg), Anja Schüler (Humboldt University), Klaus Schwabe (RWTH Aachen), Alan Steinweis (University of Nebraska, Lincoln), Michael Wala (Ruhr University, Bochum), Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (University of Munich), Michael Weißborn (Stuttgart).

What are the challenges for historians at the beginning of the twenty-first century as they perceive a growing trend toward internationalization in everyday life? In what ways do historical processes such as increased communication across national borders shape the art of writing history? What are the theoretical and methodological challenges for the historical profession in the years ahead? How does the perceived internationalization of life alter intellectual pursuits? What does it mean for historians to deal with international and global phenomena in research and teaching? What are the issues at stake if historians want to provide historical guidance in the public realm? These are some of the questions that are most intimately connected with the professional career of Detlef Junker, on the occasion of whose sixty-fifth birthday the symposium was organized. As professor of modern history at the University of Heidelberg since 1975, founder of the Schurman Library for American History in 1986, Curt Engelhorn Professor for American History since 1999, and founding director of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies since 2003, Junker has been actively engaged in the promotion of American history in Germany. As the GHI's second director from 1994 to 1999, he was also closely involved in the transatlantic exchange among specialists of German history. Moreover, a

major focus of Detlef Junker's research and teaching has been the history of U.S. foreign policy as well as the history of international relations.

The first roundtable looked at the study of German history outside Germany. From the point of view of an Austrian "outsider," Christoph Berger Waldenegg underscored the fundamental importance of West German historiographical debates in the shaping of Austrian history. Intellectually, Austrian historians were often inspired by West German debates, while at the same time they were constructing historical narratives distancing themselves from German history. This is particularly true with regard to the history of National Socialism, which Austrians long considered to be outside their national experience. Egbert Klautke looked at the British case and underscored the relative importance of German history between 1870 and 1945 as a favorite subject of British students. The teaching and writing of German history is thus colored by long-standing British perceptions of Nazi Germany and World War II. From an institutional point of view, British history departments are more international than their German counterparts, although history tends to be very much compartmentalized along national borders. Christiane Rösch provided an overview of the German Democratic Republic as a topic among U.S. historians. Although GDR Studies were very much part of Western scholarship on the Soviet bloc before 1990, studies of the former East Germany have seen a remarkable boom, especially among U.S. historians. Often incorporating a cultural history point of view, American historiography of the GDR has been highly influential for research in this field carried out in Germany. Taking a generational approach, Alan Steinweis surveyed American scholarship on the Holocaust. The sheer number and diversity of U.S. historians working in this field is going to guarantee the continued influence of North American scholars. An outside perspective seems important with morally charged issues such as the history of Nazi Germany. The final contribution, by Volker Berghahn, looked at various issues that have dominated the transatlantic exchange among American historians of Germany. The Fischer controversy as well as debates about the *Sonderweg* stand out as examples. In recent years, post-1945 scholarship benefited from the diversity of approaches being pursued in the United States, such as gender history and the new cultural history.

The second roundtable was devoted to the study of U.S. history in Germany and Europe. As chair Manfred Berg pointed out, U.S. history enjoys only weak institutional roots in Germany, and faces two challenges: first, to serve as translator of U.S. history for a German audience; and second, to make its own contribution to American history. Reinhard R. Doerries gave an overview of the state of the art in Germany. Despite the obvious importance of the United States for Germany and the catastrophic results of German misperceptions of the U.S. during the twen-

tieth century, American history remains a comparatively neglected field in Germany. This is in marked contrast to the remarkable institutional growth of American literary studies at German universities since the 1960s. Whereas fifty-nine chairs for American literature exist in Germany, there are only fourteen chairs in American history. This led Doerries to a renewed plea for stronger lobbying efforts on behalf of American history in Germany. Kees van Minnen described the situation in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, which seems worse than in Germany, with, for example, the prestigious chair in American history at Leyden University having been left unoccupied for several years. Van Minnen also gave a thorough overview of the activities of the Roosevelt Study Center, which in recent years has made considerable efforts toward establishing a network of European historians of the United States. Marion Breunig's contribution sought to identify the contributions of German historians of early American history. Looking at the examples of Willy Paul Adams, Jürgen Heideking, and Hermann Wellenreuther, she argued that the lack of large-scale syntheses in early American history offers opportunities for outsiders because of an increasing trend toward particularization and regionalization in American history in the United States. The discussion was broadened by Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson's survey of gender and race issues. Because of its limited beginnings within Women's Studies during the 1990s, gender perspectives have only recently begun to influence U.S. history in Germany. Race as an analytical category has enjoyed a much more prominent role at German universities, however, and might have a positive impact on research in the United States. As the final speaker, Michael Wala also detected a solid chance for outsiders to make important contributions. U.S. historiography would benefit from diverse perspectives. European historians, for example, have a command of the languages that are indispensable to study the history of the South, the West, and the frontier. It also seems necessary to look at the "forgotten" nineteenth century from a comparative perspective, where German historians of the United States could provide important input into the general historiography in Germany.

The third roundtable was devoted to international history, and was chaired by Klaus Schwabe. He pointed to a general feeling of dissatisfaction with traditional diplomatic history. Although globalization in fact predates the nineteenth century, the question remains to what degree historians have been aware of these developments. In addition, he posed questions about the prerequisites for doing international history in terms of language skills, the importance of national prejudices, and the causal relevance of its objects for synthesis. Akira Iriye then surveyed several transnational actors from the 1920s on, making a strong case for viewing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as agents of globalization.

Globalization seems a more appropriate description of some of the phenomena that we are encountering because this term transcends the nation-state as the given framework of analysis. Jessica Gienow-Hecht asked whether international historians really “play with each other.” Their different backgrounds and training, academic structures, and social and political interests seem to remain an obstacle. Although a clear definition of the object of international history has become more complicated if not impossible, the cultural turn has not only resulted in a broadening of the debate, but also in its internationalization. By looking at how three German philosopher-historians, Hegel, Schelling, and Ranke, defined their objects, Kiran Klaus Patel asked what kind of international history we are doing. Whereas Hegel stands for the problem of how to account for the state, Schelling brings out the ambivalences and the problem of not taking a normative stance toward transnational actors. Ranke, however, despite the teleological dimensions in his oeuvre, reminds historians of the importance of sober empirical work and the problems of global history. Wilfried Mausbach reminded the audience that not only the nation state is a constantly changing “imagined community.” Transnational or even global communities such as the “West,” the “Occident,” or more recently the “Anglo-Sphere” are culturally constructed as well. Anja Schüler concluded the session with a striking case study linking gender issues with transnational reform movements among female social reform workers in the Progressive Era.

The final session was devoted to current German-American relations. Detlef Junker and Robert Gerald Livingston discussed the question “Are there still common interests among the U.S. and Germany?” Although they disagreed on a number of details, both Junker and Livingston saw the mutual relationship heading for further trouble. Interests have been diverging since September 11 and will continue to do so. Not only have interests been defined in different fashions: Despite continued professions of shared values on both sides of the Atlantic, the political cultures have been developing along different paths. Whereas Livingston saw a number of areas in which Europeans and Americans could pragmatically work together, Junker was more skeptical, and highlighted fundamental cultural differences. In addition, Junker was more negative in his assessment of the impact of President George W. Bush’s presidency on the current situation.

On the following day, during the academic ceremony in honor of Detlef Junker, Alexander Demandt presented his lecture “Antiquity in America” in Heidelberg’s splendid “Alte Aula.” During his lecture, the audience was reminded of the fact that despite a long history of repeated misunderstandings and different readings of tradition, North Americans and Europeans share a common heritage.

*Philipp Gassert*