

# PREFACE

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If historians are accustomed to thinking about the role of contingency in shaping the past, they are also much like everyone else in talking about “chance,” “opportunity,” and “luck” when it comes to discussing their own lives. Luck has certainly played a very large part in my life over the past decade. In January 1998, I arrived in Washington to take up the position of deputy director of the German Historical Institute. I assumed that I would be spending three, at most five years in Washington, and I had no idea that I would soon be stepping in as acting director. Nor during my tenure as acting director did I think that I would be offered the position of director. As I now prepare to leave Washington to return to Germany, I cannot emphasize strongly enough just how lucky I have been in my time at the GHI.

It was lucky for me that I came to an institute that was a firmly established fixture on the German and American scholarly landscapes. My predecessors in the director’s office, Hartmut Lehmann and Detlef Junker, had built a formidable transatlantic network of connections and contacts for the GHI, and I profited enormously from the goodwill toward the GHI that I inherited. At the center of the GHI’s support network stand its Academic Advisory Board and the Friends of the GHI. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the members, past and present, of those two bodies for their engagement on behalf of the GHI. It also made my job easier knowing that I could draw upon the advice, encouragement, and support of the transatlantic community of scholars who in one way or another have had something to do with the GHI—former research fellows, recipients of GHI fellowships, and participants in GHI-sponsored conferences and programs.

Expanding the GHI’s *Nachwuchsprogramme* for students, doctoral candidates, and postdocs stood high on the list of what I sought to achieve when I became acting director, and it is a source of deep satisfaction to me that the GHI was able to add to its programs for up-and-coming historians. Our long-running annual Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German history is now complemented by the Young Scholars Forum in American and comparative history. Our Medieval History Seminar provides another venue for young European and North American scholars to discuss their research with leading senior scholars in their field. We launched a summer course to introduce American students to German archives; the success of that initiative encouraged us to create a counterpart for German doctoral students in American history. The number of

fellowships for dissertation and *Habilitation* research the GHI awards annually has roughly tripled over the past ten years. On just about any given day, two or three GHI interns are at work in Washington helping our research fellows. My pride in these programs goes hand in hand with deep gratitude to the colleagues and organizations who have made them possible. I had the easy job: I just said "yes." The real work fell to those who organized the programs, to the GHI staff members who took care of travel arrangements and logistics, and to the scholars who graciously took the time to serve as mentors. These programs depend in large measure on funding provided by Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research through the GHI's sponsoring foundation, the Stiftung Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland. Many of the *Nachwuchsprogramme* would not be possible, however, without the additional support provided by partner institutions, foundations, and corporations. Their help has been especially important for the GHI's special-purpose, named fellowships and prizes for younger scholars. I am pleased to report, for example, that the GHI and the German Society of Philadelphia (GSP) have just created a new fellowship to enable graduate students to conduct research at the GSP's Joseph Horner Memorial Library, one of the richest collections of German Americana anywhere. Outside funding has also been crucial for the prizes the GHI sponsors to recognize the work of younger scholars: the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, the Franz Steiner Prize in transatlantic history, and the publication prize jointly awarded by the GHI and the European Society for Environmental History.

The GHI's work in environmental history, one of our principal areas of focus during my tenure as director, has provided an opportunity to build upon the institute's strength in comparative history, to look beyond the Atlantic world, and to expand our network of contacts across the globe. We have also been able to extend our reach and serve students and teachers throughout the world with the most ambitious project now underway at the GHI, the bilingual Internet site "German History in Documents and Images" (GHDI). At last count, 1,300 people per day were visiting the site and spending an average of more than 20 minutes using and downloading the primary source materials it offers. Like GHDI, the *Bulletin* and the GHI's Reference Guides are now available on the institute's Web site, and I am especially happy to report that starting later this spring many of the titles in the "Publications of the German Historical Institute" series that we publish in collaboration with Cambridge University Press will be available free of charge on the website as well.

Taking the balance of my time at the GHI—weighing what I achieved and what I did not, setting the strokes of luck against missed opportunities—I can only consider myself a very fortunate man. Above all, I have

been lucky in my colleagues. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with the GHI's research fellows, a group of remarkably creative, dedicated, and hard-working scholars. They and everyone else on the GHI's staff have been unfailingly helpful over the years. The help they provided was as diverse as their interests, skills, and personalities. It might take the form of assistance with a project, a constructively skeptical question, or a joke in a moment of stress. As my responsibilities increased, so, too, did my reliance on the GHI's fellows, support staff, administrators, and editors. I do not know how to give adequate thanks to them: Let me say simply that they are the reason I have so enjoyed working at the GHI. Much as I would like to name names in this instance, I do not have space here to thank each member of the staff individually. It is only fair, though, that I single out the five colleagues who had to deal with an unending stream of questions and requests from me: my assistants Christa Brown and Bärbel Thomas; GHI administrative director Sabine Fix; our senior editor David Lazar; and, in particular, my former deputy Dirk Schumann. In closing, I would like to give special thanks to my new deputy and soon-to-be acting director, Gisela Mettele. It was a lucky day for the GHI when Gisela applied for a research fellow position; I know I leave the institute in good hands.

*Christof Mauch*