FORUM:
THE GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE
AND THE NAZI PAST

In 2005, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer announced the appointment of an independent commission of historians to investigate the history of the Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt) during the Nazi era and the early postwar period. The commission published its findings in October 2010 in the book Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik [The Foreign Office and the Past: German Diplomats in the Third Reich and the Federal Republic], by Eckart Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes, and Moshe Zimmermann (Munich: Blessing, 2010). The book quickly attracted attention, became a bestseller, and triggered a wide-ranging public debate in Germany. In March 2011, the German Historical Institute in Washington hosted a panel discussion about the book, in which two members of the commission, Norbert Frei (University of Jena) and Peter Hayes (Northwestern University), were joined by two other scholars, Christopher Browning (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Miriam Rürup (GHI), and the German Ambassador to the United States, Klaus Scharioth. To introduce readers to the book and the debate it prompted, this issue of the Bulletin presents an overview by Norbert Frei and Peter Hayes along with assessments of the book by Christopher Browning, Johannes Hürter (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich), Holger Nehring (University of Sheffield), and Volker Ullrich (Hamburg).