This Bulletin begins with a thought-provoking article by Martin Geyer on “Speculation, Corruption, and the State of Emergency during the Great Depression.” Based on the Gerald Feldman Memorial Lecture that Geyer delivered at the GHI earlier this year, his article approaches the dissolution of the Weimar Republic and the Great Depression from a new angle, by examining the nexus between the emerging discourse about speculation and the future of capitalism, on the one hand, and new forms of state intervention under “state of emergency” powers and debates about the proper role of the state, on the other hand. By probing the example of the Reichsfluchtsteuer in some detail, Geyer is also able to illuminate the role of anti-Semitism as well as continuities between late Weimar and Nazi policies.

The next section of the Bulletin is a special forum on “The Challenge of Biography,” edited by GHI Research Associate Atiba Pertilla and GHI Deputy Director Uwe Spiekermann, which resulted from a panel at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association in Chicago that was organized and sponsored by the GHI’s Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project. The six articles in this section seek to provide an overview of current state of biographical research since its rejuvenation by the “biographical turn” of the late 1990s. In doing so, the forum also seeks to assess the GHI’s Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project’s contribution to biographical research, to several sub-disciplines, and to public history. Volker Depkat’s article offers a nuanced overview of the current state of biographical research in Germany and the United States. Next, Levke Harders makes a strong argument for using biographies as a tool to examine “marginalized lives” and broaden ethnocentric historical perspectives. While these two articles focus on the genre of biography, the following two articles offer case studies of biographical research beyond the analysis of an individual life and the epistemological problems related to this traditional form of biography. Clifton Hood uses biographical data to examine both the coherence and the transformation of the New York upper class in the 1940s. Susie Pak, drawing on her innovative book “Gentlemen Bankers,” analyzes the cultural and social milieu of the New York Banking House of J.P. Morgan and its interactions with German-Jewish bankers, especially Kuhn, Loeb & Co. Reflecting on these different forms of biographical research, Atiba Pertilla and Uwe Spiekermann discuss the specific biographical approach of the
GHI Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project. Finally, shifting perspective from research to classroom, Isabelle Schmitz assesses the benefits and challenges of using biographies in teaching history at the high school and college level.

The “GHI Research” section features an article by GHI Postdoctoral Fellow Emily Swafford, who examines the “internationalism” of the American Girl Scouts organization from the 1920s onward, with a special focus on the expansion of American Girl Scout troops overseas in the context of the stationing of U.S. troops in postwar Germany and Japan. The conference reports once again reflect a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from the history of obesity and health to the history of humanitarianism, from the history of the do-it-yourself movement to the history of Los Angeles as a site of German-American crossing, and from the history of childhood in wartime to the history of migration.

The GHI has lined up a diverse and interesting program of lectures and conferences for this fall and next spring. Please consult the calendar of upcoming events in this issue’s “News” section and on our website. We very much hope to see you at one of these events in the coming year.

Hartmut Berghoff (Director) and Richard F. Wetzell (Editor)