

Editor's Note

THE current issue of the journal is devoted to the Central European peasant in the early modern period. I would like to explain the genesis of the issue to the readers of *Central European History*. Some three years ago I inquired of Professor Hermann Rebel whether he would be interested in reviewing two recent books, by Andreas Suter and David Luebke respectively, centering on the peasantry. He accepted the task. Subsequently, he submitted a multiple review of more than eighty pages that, while dealing with both books at length, raised questions about the direction of peasant studies in the past decade or more. In response to my request to cut the manuscript sharply, Professor Rebel made a valiant effort but it still remained a very sizable manuscript.

I then decided to treat it as an article manuscript and sent it out to two referees who were highly qualified to judge the manuscript. The responses were very positive regarding publication because they argued in the words of one, "It opens a set of issues, both in peasant studies and more generally, to an important debate and does so in a well informed way." They both recommended that the two authors be given the opportunity to reply at length in the same issue in which the manuscript was to be published. I decided to follow their advice because Rebel evidently had not just written one of the longest book reviews on record but had used these pages to assess the state of the field and his concerns about its direction. I inquired of professors Suter and Luebke whether they would be willing to compose replies to Rebel's manuscript which I had, in the meantime, edited and shortened somewhat. They both agreed to respond and, indeed, did so within a reasonable time-frame. Thus, I visualize this issue as a debate among historians of Central European peasants, in the form of a multiple book review, of the state of their subdiscipline. I hope that I have made the right decision.

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