

Letter from the Editor: *Am Anfang war Unfug!*

My first encounter with *Central European History* (*CEH*) must have been in the spring of 1989. I was in my final semester of college, sitting in the office of my undergraduate adviser, Henry Ashby Turner, the renowned historian of Weimar and Nazi Germany. Turner, who cut a formidable figure, regularly met with me in his office at Yale that academic year, his two hunting dogs imposingly stationed on either side of him. There we would go over, line by line, the comments he had made in red ink in distinctively bold, calligraphic strokes on the latest draft installments of my senior history thesis. Though its content had no direct relation to my research (on French occupation policies in Germany in the late 1940s), Turner showed me the latest copy of *CEH* during one of these meetings, pointing out and praising in particular an article by Margaret Lavinia Anderson on the *Kulturkampf*. He remarked further that the journal was the leading one in the field, but that it had a curious tendency to appear behind schedule. The issue he handed me in the spring of 1989—the one that, he told me, had just appeared, and the first I had ever seen—bore the date of March 1986 on its impressively austere green cover!

CEH's (old) reputation for tardy publication is a recurring theme in several of the contributions to this special issue marking the journal's fiftieth anniversary. Konrad Jarausch recalls issues appearing with the year 1989 on the cover that contained articles “commenting on the course of German unification, which had not yet happened at the time the issue was scheduled to appear!”¹ Roger Chickering similarly mentions Gerald Feldman's memorial to Thomas Nipperdey, who had died in June 1992: the obituary appeared in the December 1991 issue, thus leaving “the impression that Feldman was a man of extraordinary foresight.” One faithful reader in the United Kingdom sardonically wrote to me recently that he almost misses the time when issues of *CEH* appeared with calls for papers for conferences that had already taken place.

These good-natured digs at some of the “practical problems” (Chickering) that previously “plagued” the journal refer above all to its final years under the stewardship of Douglas A. Unfug, *CEH*'s “meticulous” (Jarausch) inaugural editor. It is a sad coincidence that Unfug died just months before the fiftieth anniversary of the journal that he founded at Emory University in March 1968. His colleague there, James Van Horn Melton, who briefly served as associate editor during Unfug's final years as editor, kindly agreed to write a memorial for this issue in which he pays fitting tribute to a colleague whose herculean efforts over two decades made the journal the “leading North American venue” for scholarship on German-speaking Central Europe. As Melton notes, Unfug made his “professional mark” as the editor of *CEH*, whose success was “all the more impressive” given that the journal was a “shoestring operation during much of his editorship.” Kenneth Ledford, who served as editor of the journal from 2004 to 2014, similarly relates in his contribution to this issue that Unfug, besides taking on

all editorial and manuscript production duties ... then contracted independently with compositors and printers to produce the printed journal—and finally, word has it, fulfilled the institutional and individual subscriptions himself by enlisting his family to gather around the dining

¹Michael Geyer similarly recalls that his first and only article in *CEH* was “written in 1990 but published in a 1989 issue.”

room table to stuff journals into envelopes and add address labels. To call this institutional informality is perhaps an understatement.

One of those family members was Unfug's first wife, Glee, who served in various other capacities, e.g., as copy editor, for a time, and as business manager.²

Unfug's immediate successor, Kenneth Barkin, took over the reins in 1991 and would go on to edit the journal for more than a dozen years, ably assisted the entire time by his former graduate student, Ursula Marcum—who, like Glee Unfug, was another unsung *female* hero of *CEH*. Kenneth Ledford received similar support during his ten years as editor from Gayle Godek. It is worth mentioning, in this context, an appendix that I have included in this commemorative issue: a list of all the major officers of the Conference Group of Central European History and of its successor, the Central European History Society—the official institutional sponsors of the journal—as well as a list of all the members of the journal's editorial staffs since 1968. What is striking to me about these lists are the largely “subordinate” roles played by women. For one, only ten of the Group/Society's sixty-one presidents have been female, and the first of these, Annelise Thimm—about whom Doris Bergen writes with great admiration and affection in her contribution to this issue—only became president in 1984, i.e., a quarter-century after the founding of the society in 1959. There has only been one female secretary-treasurer, and women have also tended to play a subsidiary, if indispensable role in the running of the journal itself, serving primarily as book review editors, or as editorial assistants in charge of copy editing, financial matters, and various administrative tasks. This only underscores what Karen Hagemann and Donna Harsch write in their contribution to this issue on the representation of female authors in *CEH* and on the percentage of articles in the journal dealing explicitly with women's or gender history: both have increased significantly since the 1990s, a result of larger developments in the field and the profession as a whole. Yet, as they rightly contend, a good deal of progress can still be made on this score. After a long run of four male editors, the recent choice of Monica Black as my successor beginning in 2019 is clearly an encouraging development, one that will no doubt mark a new era in the history of the journal. In which specific ways remains to be seen, of course.

This special issue celebrating *CEH*'s fiftieth anniversary is divided into three parts that, together, offer wide-ranging reflections on the past, present, and future of both the journal and the historiography of German-speaking Central Europe as a whole. To that end, more than two dozen senior and junior scholars working in the United States, as well as in Australia, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, kindly agreed to help commemorate this important milestone in the life of the journal by “taking stock” in various ways of it and the field of study to which it is dedicated.

The first part, “Recollections and Reminiscences,” offers a series of personal memories by six individuals who have been intimately involved with *CEH* in various ways over the past half century: Kenneth Barkin, Doris Bergen, Roger Chickering, Kees Gispens, Konrad Jarusch, and Kenneth Ledford.³ The second part, “Reflections, Reckonings, and

²She also helped create an extremely useful index for the first twenty volumes published between 1968 and 1987. This appeared as a hundred-page addendum in *CEH* 20, no. 3/4 (1987).

³The reflections by Barkin and Chickering are reprints of essays that were previously published in *CEH*. I tried to solicit a contribution from Ursula Marcum and several others, but was unable to establish contact, despite repeated attempts.

Revelations,” consists of more than a dozen essays that provide historiographical overviews of various subfields and time periods—from the Holy Roman Empire (Joachim Whaley) and the Reformation Era (Helmut Puff) to Habsburg history (Chad Bryant and John Deak) and the so-called *Sattelzeit* (George Williamson), from cultural history (Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter) to colonialism and postcolonialism (Matthew Fitzpatrick), from foreign relations (William Glenn Gray) to authoritarianism (Michael Meng) and the Holocaust (Mark Roseman). Many of these essays usefully relate the important ways in which *CEH* has, since its founding, shaped, reflected, and contributed to the historiography of these various subfields. In fact, the ones by Whaley, Puff, Bryant, and Williamson on the pre-nineteenth-century era and on the Habsburg lands make one wonder if the journal’s editors, who have repeatedly expressed regret for not doing enough to encourage or publish work on these important topics and periods, doth protest too much...

In addition to the essay by Hagemann and Harsch on gender issues, the first section includes Sandrine Kott’s look at the rich Francophone historiography on modern Germany (and its neglect by many Anglo-American scholars); there is also an overview of the book review section in *CEH* and especially the increasingly difficult challenges that Julia Torrie, the journal’s current associate editor, has experienced in soliciting them. The third part, “Reveries and Reverberations,” contains reflective essays by five of the field’s most eminent scholars, with Jürgen Kocka looking back at the *Sonderweg* thesis, approach, and debate; Charles Maier, James Sheehan, and Shelley Baranowski looking forward to the possible future(s) of Central European studies; and Michael Geyer contemplating issues related to sovereignty and “transnationality,” as well as the ways in which a consideration of the Swiss *Sonderfall* may serve as an impetus for the “future of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*.” Almost all the essays in the second part of this issue point out similar suggestions for future themes and areas of research in the various subfields that make up the field as a whole. And some even helpfully point out as well areas where *CEH* itself can improve as a journal.

It is impossible to do justice to the many insightful findings and observations by those kind enough to contribute to this commemorative issue. There are a few leitmotifs, however, that deserve some emphasis. The specter of the *Sonderweg*, for instance, haunts these pages—and not just in Kocka’s self-reflective essay. Maier and Sheehan both nevertheless agree that the old burning questions—above all, those concerning the causes and consequences of National Socialism, i.e., the how, when, and why of where “Germany went wrong,” in Maier’s memorable phrase—no longer dominate the agenda, or at least not to the extent they once did.⁴ The passage of time and generational shifts surely play a role here, as both authors suggest. In fact, another recurring theme in the issue directly related to this is the effect that the first-hand experience of Nazism had on older scholars and their output. Yet another has a more presentist bent to it: the recent election—and behavior—of Donald Trump, the forty-fifth president of the United States. References to Trump and his policies are sometimes indirect in

⁴Sheehan also perceptively writes the following in his essay: “If there is a decline in contentious passion among contemporary German historians, it is because we have less in common, not because our views about what matters have become more alike.” If that is true, then one wonders about the future tenor of Habsburg studies, where, as the essays by Bryant and Deak suggest, a new revisionist consensus has emerged, one claiming that nationalism was *not* the cause of the empire’s ultimate downfall. In other words, will debates about the role of nationalism in the Habsburg lands go the same way one day as those about an alleged German *Sonderweg*? And if so, what effect will that have on the field of Habsburg studies? Deak and Bryant both address that important theme head-on in their contributions to this issue.

this commemorative issue, but they nevertheless abound. That should come as no surprise, given the recent wave of comments—also by a number of respected historians of modern Central European history—on perceived parallels between current social and political developments in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, and those that took place during late Weimar and the rise of fascism. However appropriate such comparisons may or may not be, they certainly offer a twist on George Santayana’s oft-quoted adage that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. It might be the case that even those who *do* remember the past are condemned to repeat it—which makes one wonder what we practitioners of history might have done differently, and still *can* do, to convey more effectively its supposed lessons.

ANDREW I. PORT
EDITOR